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October 5, 2025

Photos by Julie Newell / Tribune Editor

Bailey Sisoy-Moore took over as executive director of the Michigan Maritime Museum in South Haven after Patti Montgomery Reinert retired at the end of September.

Taking the helm

Sisoy-Moore named Michigan Maritime Museum director

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — Bailey Sisoy-Moore, a seventh-generation Detroit native, left the hustle and bustle of the Motor City to start a new chapter of her life as the new executive director of the Michigan Maritime Museum in South Haven.

Former director Patti Montgomery Reinert officially retired at the end of September, after working 16 years at the museum.

After accepting the position in June, Sisoy-Moore worked with Reinert for four months to ensure a smooth transition and officially started as full director on Oct. 1.

She has two bachelor's degrees in automotive design and history from the College for Creative Studies in Detroit.

The Michigan Maritime Museum in South Haven offers a variety of activities from hands-on exhibits to historically immersive experiences on the lake.

Sisoy-Moore recently sat down with South Haven Tribune Editor Julie Newell to talk about her life and future goals as director.

■ **Why did you decide to take the job as executive director?**

There's very few museums anywhere in the world, let alone in our little slice of heaven in Michigan that have the potential and the strong foundation that the Michigan Maritime Museum has.

I've been in the industry a long time. I've had the privilege of working in nonprofits and for profits, private museums, public museums, private history, public history and there's always a few common threads that are generally the norm. You know, you're always fighting to sort of get community involvement, you're always

See **DIRECTOR**, page A4

Michigan churches, houses of worship review security after Grand Blanc shooting

By ANNE SNABES
The Detroit News (TNS)

DETROIT — Detroit-area faith leaders are encouraging churches, mosques, synagogues and other houses of worship to review their security plans as area faithful feel shaken after two attacks targeting Michigan churches in a little more than three months.

Even before Sunday's tragedy that left five people dead, including the suspected shooter, and eight injured, several religious leaders in the region said their communities have adopted security measures in recent years in response to violence and hateful rhetoric in the United States. Some now lock their doors during services, directing parishioners to one entrance when services begin. Several have armed security teams in place during services.

One local Protestant church is in the process of installing security cameras.

The Rev. Elbert Dulworth, pastor of St. Paul's United Methodist Church on Romeo Street in Rochester, Mich., said in the past, people "just walked in" to the church's building, which now locks its doors when its preschool is in session.

"This was the safe place," Dulworth said. "It's the place that they could escape from the world, and to know that this part of the violence of our society is encroaching on the place that is safe is so hard for all of us ... (But) it's important that we keep our children and our people safe. So we've been doing that."

The Council on American-Islamic Relations, a grassroots civil rights and advocacy group, meanwhile, sent its "Best Practices for Mosque and Community Safety" booklet on Sunday to Islamic institutions nationally "as a reminder of safety precautions" after the Grand Blanc Township attack.

And the Archdiocese of Detroit has been in contact with its parishes and schools to remind them that their campus safety plans are "to be reviewed regularly with local law enforcement" and updated with additional measures as deemed necessary, said spokeswoman Holly Fournier. The Archdiocese has about 213 Catholic parishes and 81 schools in Southeast Michigan.

Dawud Walid, CAIR-MI's executive director, said that it's "a sheer tragedy" that innocent people lost their lives in a place of worship on Sunday. He said many Michigan mosques already have armed security during prayer times.

"The Muslim community has felt somewhat under siege for a number of years, but thank God, we have not had a situation of an armed gunman going to a mosque and committing such an atrocious attack here in the state of Michigan," Walid said.

Authorities are still trying to determine why 40-year-old Thomas "Jake" Sanford

See **SECURITY**, page A5

'The economic impact is fairly spread out'

Palisades plant nears final phase of repowering effort

By TONY WITTKOWSKI
For the Tribune

COVERT — It's been more than three years since the former Palisades Nuclear Power Plant was shut down and the decommissioning process began.

A lot has changed since the initial closure, with a lengthy effort to repower the Covert Township plant which has included various public hearings with a U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission panel, hundreds of hirings, ongoing inspections and securing funds from the federal and state governments. Now, Holtec International, the operator of the power plant, is close to making history.

"This is the first time a nuclear plant has gone into decommissioning and been brought back into operations," said Nick Culp, senior manager of government affairs and communications at Holtec. "From a regularity standpoint, that is something that's never been done before either. This was not a solo act from Holtec. We've had support within the industry and the support we've received from federal, state and local governments."

One of the latest hurdles came in late July, when the NRC reauthorized power operations for the Palisades plant. With this announcement, Palisades was allowed to transition back to operational status from decommissioning – enabling Holtec to restart the plant with new nuclear fuel after meeting various conditions, inspections and testing requirements.

Culp said the plant is on track and planning for a restart by the end of this year.

"We need to complete all of our major projects that are a work in progress," he said. "So far, our restart remains on schedule and below budget. All plant systems and equipment need to be put in place and all federal requirements need to be met."

With there being three months left in the calendar year, Culp said a "safe, long-term operation" is the first priority.

"The work needs to be done correctly and make sure everything is back in place before that can happen. We have our restart schedule, but the plant's safety and reliability is what we're focused on with that restart."

While the repowering effort is not as simple as flipping a switch, Culp said they are focused on the final inspections, before there's testing that's done at multiple levels prior to going fully online.

For the nuclear power plant that has been dormant for three-plus years, he said there's a gradual onramp that must follow a standard process.

"We have brought back our emergency program and have 12-hour shifts for key personnel," he said. "Today, we are operating and behaving as if we are a power plant."

Palisades workers are in the process of reassembling their turbine. One of the two low-pressure turbine rotators was installed last week, while the next one will be added within the next two weeks.

Recent work included a nose-to-tail inspection on that system and a lot of replacements, Culp said. On the non-nuclear side of the plant, workers are undergoing a deep cleaning of secondary generators.

Culp said they have also received fuel that was used in two previous operating cycles.

"One of the first things we had to do was procure new fuel," he said. "Our fuel design is unique in the industry."

Back to work

In the early efforts of repowering Palisades, Holtec turned to the NRC, which formed a Nuclear Restart Panel to look into what this process would entail.

Over the course of 20 public meetings, the panel reviewed information and sent in feedback.

"We proposed a regulatory path to restart within the NRC's framework," Culp said. "When Holtec became the operator of Palisades, there were restrictions in place. We brought back all of those things in the regulatory process, which was subject to lengthy reviews and public meetings."

According to Culp,

See **PALISADES**, page A2

Don Campbell / HP file photo

The Holtec International Palisades Power Plant in Covert Township is pictured recently.

The Tribune: Celebrating Our 126th Year

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OBITUARIES

Lois Sarno

Nov. 4, 1925 – Sept. 17, 2025

Lois Elaine Sarno, 99, of Covert, Mich., passed away on Sept. 17, 2025, at River Ridge Retirement Home in South Haven, Mich.

Born on Nov. 4, 1925, in Chicago, Ill., to Frank and Marjorie (Cox) Blaney. Lois graduated from Covert High School in 1943.

During World War II, she joined the Cadet Nurse Corps to study nursing. After the war ended, she married her high school sweetheart, Harry Sarno on Dec. 15, 1945 at her parents' home in Covert.

After her children were born, Lois worked part-time as a nurse at Watervliet Community Hospital.

Lois went on to earn a bachelor's degree in education from Western Michigan University in 1965 and a master's degree in 1968.

She dedicated 26 years to teaching at Covert Public Schools, retiring in 1981. In retirement, she served on the Van Buren County Mental Health Board and was a member of the Covert Retired Teachers Club.

She also was an avid bridge player and enjoyed traveling with Harry. Lois was a member of St. Basil Catholic Church and the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Lois was preceded in death by her beloved parents and her husband, Harry Sarno, who died in 2012.

Lois is survived by her three children: Jane (David) Cowan of Kalamazoo, Mich.; James (Edith) Sarno of South Haven, Mich.; and Gail (Lindsey) Smith of South Haven, Mich.

She also leaves behind nine grandchildren – Harry, Joseph, Maeva, Peter, Margaret, Keller, Lois, Samuel and Gale – and fourteen great-grandchildren: Donovan, Gwendolyn, Katelyn, Logan, Elodie, Jules, Geny, Archer, Henry, George, Trevor, Lynwood, Arlo and Theodore.

She is also survived by her sister, Margery Ford of Kalamazoo, Mich., along with many nieces, nephews and dear friends.

It was nearly impossible to have a conversation with Lois without laughing.

Visitation will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. on Oct. 10 at Filbrandt Chapel in South Haven.

A memorial Mass will be celebrated at 11 a.m. on Oct. 11 at St. Basil Catholic Church in South Haven, with Father Jacob Sundararaju officiating.

Interment alongside her husband, Harry, will follow at Fort Custer National Cemetery in Augusta, Mich.

Memorial contributions may be made to St. Basil Catholic Church (513 Monroe Blvd., South Haven, MI 49090), Caring Circle Hospice (4025 Health Park Lane, St. Joseph, MI 49085), or to the hospice of your choice.

Kindly share your thoughts and memories of Lois online at www.starksfamilyfh.com.

William McNees

May 10, 1949 – Sept. 29, 2025

William D. McNees "Bill" passed away at his home, Monday, Sept. 29, 2025.

Born on May 10, 1949 in South Haven Michigan to Edward and Lenore McNees. United in marriage to Eda Marie Haas on April 17, 1971.

Bill is survived by his wife of 54 years Eda, daughter Teresa (Mark) Haynes and grandchildren; Zac (Anna) Haynes, Sierra (Jake) Allen. Also survived by siblings; Peggy Kenwabikise, Eleanor (John) Satkey, Edward (Sherry) McNees, Rose(Robert) Owens, Terri (Tom) Quinn and many nieces and nephews.

Preceded in death by his parents, sister Sandra Reidsma and brother-in-law Leonard Kenwabikise.

Bill met the love of is life Eda on a blind date. Together they raised their daughter Teresa.

During this time, Bill worked for Lovejoy and then moved to Mancelona to work at a Cheese Factory. The family then moved back to South Haven and Bill went to work at Fennville Canners and worked there until he retired.

Bill was an outdoorsman, he loved two tracking, hunting with his nephews and son-in-law, fishing and morel mushroom hunting. He was known to have huge bonfires, the bigger the better.

He liked to sing, creating his own little ditties. Hanging out on the property up north with the grandkids and family was one of his favorite things to do. Bill was a puzzle guy; he has over 100 puzzles that he has put together and are hanging in his garage. His zest for life and all-around fun nature will be missed.

Visitation for Bill will be from 10 a.m. until the memorial service at 11 a.m. on Thursday, Oct. 9 at Peace Lutheran Church, 805 S. Wilmott St. Otsego, MI 49078. Pastor Timmermann will Officiate.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to Al-Van Humane Society or Peace Lutheran Church of Otsego.

To those who choose to leave a memory or condolence go to: www.starksfamilyfh.com.

Arrangements are entrusted to Filbrandt Chapel – Starks Family Funeral Homes and Cremation Services. 269-637-0333.

PALISADES

From page A1

Southwest Michigan as a whole is already seeing the direct economic impact.

The plant is staffed with 600 full-time employees – compared to the 200 workers they had to decommission the plant in June of 2022.

Restaffing and retraining has been a big part of getting the plant running again. The operations department is up and running, while Holtec has also set a process for training a new plant operator – which Culp said takes about 18 months.

"We got our training accreditation back because we know there will be attrition and retirements over time," he said. "We graduated a new class of operators earlier this summer. We now have a second class of initial licensed operators graduating next year and have started a third operators class for continuity purposes."

Palisades currently has more than 1,200 contractors and vendors through 15 labor unions, as well as long-term suppliers who are on site providing specialty work who have previously worked at the Covert Township plant.

Planting roots

Construction on the Palisades Nuclear Power Plant began in the late 1960s, and took four years to be completed.

Consumers Energy ran the plant until 2007, when they went to market and sold the plant to Entergy Corp. At the time, it was a 15-year power purchase agreement, which meant a utility partner would buy all energy produced at Palisades at an agreed-upon price through 2022.

Culp said Palisades was essentially operating on a wholesale market with no guaranteed rate for return – as a free market plant.

In 2018, Entergy and Holtec made a joint announcement that at the end of its power agreement in 2022, the asset would be transferred to Holtec for accelerated decommissioning on an 18-year timeline.

From 2018 and 2022, Culp said Holtec officials consistently heard from state and federal leaders about keeping Palisades online.

"After the ownership transfer took place, we were contacted from the governor's office and the U.S. Department of Energy about keeping it online," Culp said.

After Holtec explored the process, they submitted for a $1.52 billion federal loan. In the next 18 months, Culp said they went through a due diligence process from a legal, financial and environmental standpoint.

"The thorough vetting process coincided with a financial contribution from the state of Michigan," Culp said.

Then came two important dominos: a pact was announced for a multi-decade partnership with power cooperatives in the summer of 2023 and the reauthorization of power operations by the NRC in July.

At the top of Holtec's list of key milestones they wish to meet is the overall impact the plant's return will be to the industry and surrounding areas.

"As far as the impact to Covert Township, it has a multiplying effect for restaurants and the hospitality industry," Culp said. "We have folks who work at the site, coming in from South Haven, Covert Township and all over Van Buren (County). We'll have folks coming in from over an hour away. The economic impact is fairly spread out."

Once online, Palisades is expected to add 800 megawatts of energy to Michigan's electric grid.

"We know looking toward the future of discussions on AI and data storage centers, this would need a tremendous amount of energy demand," Culp added. "Data centers will place a tremendous demand on base load energy."

The Spotlight

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Meet our Pets of the Week, Kittens!
For this week's Pet of the Week, we couldn't pick just one kitten! With so many tiny whiskered faces tumbling around our shelter, every kitten deserves the spotlight. From playful explorers to professional snugglers, we've got kittens of every personality waiting to meet you.
And here's the best part: thanks to Cathy Bissell and BISSELL Pet Foundation, we are once again participating in their Empty the Shelters event. Adoption fees for all kittens (as well as our other adult cats and dogs) are reduced October 1st to the 15th. That means there's never been a better time to find your new furry family member! Come meet the kittens, fall in love, and help us find homes for every last whiskered face.
Pumpkin Painting
Put on your best costume and join us on October 26th from noon to 2pm for a festive fall afternoon at Al-Van Humane Society! Our Pumpkin Painting event is fun for all ages, with everything you need to create your own spookyor silly masterpiece. While you're here, snap a photo in our Halloween-themed photo booth, enjoy some treats, and visit some of our adoptable pets for a little extra furry fun. A $5 donation is suggested (but not required), and every dollar helps us care for the animals who call Al-Van home. Come celebrate the season, get creative, and support pets in need. It's a Halloween event you won't want to miss!
THIS WEEK'S WISH LIST
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Our Annual Best Of South Haven contest is happening here!
Starting on October 1, write in your votes for dozens of categories.
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Vote through October 15th
Go to www.southhaventribune.com and click the Best Of link.
South Haven Tribune

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Photo provided

Serita's Black Rose Duo will kick off First Congregational UCC's Fall Concert Series on Oct. 19. in South Haven.

Serita's Black Rose Duo to kick off fall concert series

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — Serita's Black Rose Duo will kick off First Congregational UCC's Fall Concert Series on Oct. 19.

According to a news release, the show will take place at 3 p.m. and feature a mix of Funk, Rock, Blues Neo-Soul and Americana music.

Self-professed "Funkateer" and award-winning singer and harmonica player Serita Crowley, along with her partner and guitarist Jon Hayes have been performing together for over two decades.

The group plays much of the timeless "feel good music" from the 60's and 70's along with their own original hits.

"Serita's fiery, blues- and soul-infused vocals come straight from the heart that is connected, dynamic, raw, versatile, engaging, and constantly emotive through her entire presence," the release stated.

Their self-titled EP release in 2012 won several awards including WYCE's Jammie Award for "Best Short Form Album", along with several Eclipse Awards for "Best Sound Design."

Crowley and Hayes have also been supporting acts for music icon Smokey Robinson and the legendary rock band Kansas.

"The Duo moves intuitively through music," The release stated. "We are welcomed into the obvious telepathy they share in reading their audience and taking us on a journey, navigating so many genres with musical excellence and deep heart."

To learn more about Serita's Black Rose Duo go to www.seritasblackrose.com.

Tickets are $20 at the door.

For more information, call Diane and Lisa at 269-637-3804, opt. 5.

Financial expert to share economic insights in SH

By TRIBUNE STAFF

ROSSELLE-MCCARTHY

SOUTH HAVEN — World-renowned economist and financial expert Dr. Marci Rosselle-McCarthy will share her insights on the county's economic status as part of the South Haven Speakers Series program.

According to a news release, the presentation will take place at 7 p.m. on Oct. 16 at the Lake Michigan College – South Haven campus.

"The deficit, employment, interest rates, tariffs, tech giants, the cost of bread and butter … what is up with the economy?" The release stated.

Rossell-McCarthy, known internationally for her clear and engaging analysis, has advised governments, financial institutions and corporations on global economic trends.

Her presentation style provides a vital connection between financial markets and the everyday lives of citizens.

"As an economist with real life experience, Marci knows how to interpret numbers counted in red and blue columns of a political spreadsheet," Speakers' Series Founder Bob Copping said in the release. "She speaks candidly on the connection of economics, politics, culture and the media."

Rossell-McCarthy earned her Ph.D. in economics from Southern Methodist University, where she was named "Young Alumni of the Year".

Her communication style allows her to effectively translate complex information.

She is the former Chief Economist for CNBC and former co-host of the well-known "pre-market" morning news and talk show Squawk Box.

"Dr. Rossell-McCarthy will share the global economic outlook against the backdrop of policy change in Washington and how economies will adjust to a world of less trade and a weaker dollar, as the Federal Reserve deals with the return of inflationary pressures," the release stated.

During the presentation she will also touch on AI and other disruptors that are continuing to shake up the business world.

The event begins with refreshments at 6:30 p.m., followed by the presentation at 7 p.m.

The South Haven Speakers Series is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

"Approximately three-quarters of the Series' budget is funded through the generosity of donors, whose support makes these community programs possible," the release stated.

For more information, visit southhavenspeakers series.org.

SH emergency services receives $2,000 grant

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — South Haven Area Emergency Services was recently awarded a $2,000 grant from Michigan Gas Utilities through its Rewarding Responders Grant program.

According to a news release, the grant was used to purchase eight small carbon monoxide detectors that attach to EMS response bags to alert paramedics to the presence of hazardous gases.

"We are grateful to Michigan Gas Utilities for partnering with us in making our community a safer place," Executive Director of South Haven Area Emergency Services Brandon Hinz said in the release. "These new detectors will alert our responders to the presence of gases when they arrive on-scene, allowing them to quickly remove people and themselves from the hazardous area."

Michigan Gas Utilities offers its Rewarding Responders Grant each year to emergency response agencies that operate in the company's service area.

"We are honored to continue our support of public safety agencies and the invaluable impact they make in our communities every day," Vice President of Michigan Gas Utilities Nick Krzeminski said in the release. "The important tools we help provide our first responders – from heavy-duty protective clothing to hazardous gas detectors – can be critical in keeping people and our communities safe."

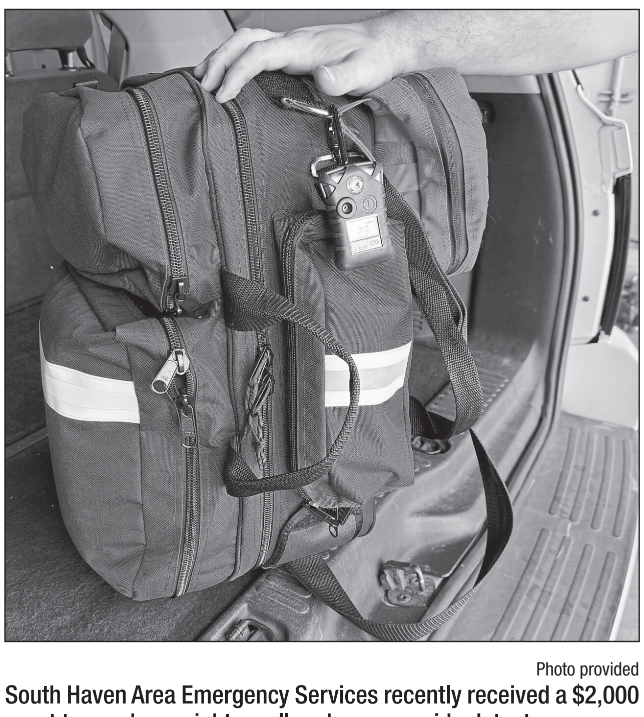

Photo provided

South Haven Area Emergency Services recently received a $2,000 grant to purchase eight small carbon monoxide detectors.

Photo provided / Tom Renner

South Haven Area Emergency Services will host the 18th annual Fire Safety Fun Night on Oct. 9 for National Fire Prevention Week.

Fire Safety Fun Night returns to South Haven

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — South Haven Area Emergency Services will host the 18th annual Fire Safety Fun Night on Oct. 9.

According to a news release, the event will take place from 5 to 7 p.m. at the department's Station 3 on Blue Star Memorial Highway.

The event coincides with National Fire Prevention Week and is intended for both kids and adults. Kids need to be accompanied by an adult.

The event will include live demonstrations, hands-on training, prizes and complimentary refreshments.

Attendees are asked to park at the Moose Lodge across from the fire station on East Wells Street.

Jazz pianist Xavier Davis to perform at Scott Club

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — Jazz Pianist Xavier Davis will perform a special, hour-long concert featuring an assortment of jazz selections on Oct. 19 at the historic South Haven Scott Club.

According to a news release, the free concert will begin at 3 p.m. and is open to all.

Davis, associate professor of jazz piano at Michigan State University College of Music, launched his professional career as a jazz pianist when the legendary vocalist Betty Carter spotted his talent at the 1994 International Association of Jazz Educators convention in Boston, Mass. while he was performing with his college ensemble.

Carter brought Davis to New York, hiring him exclusively as the pianist of her working trio. Today, he is one of the most accomplished jazz pianists worldwide.

"Having led master classes and clinics all over the world and coming from a family of music educators, passing on knowledge and skills to young musicians is very important to Davis," the release stated. "His teaching appointment at MSU followed six years of teaching at the Juilliard School."

DAVIS

Davis' development as a musician was greatly influenced by the inspiration and guidance received from Carl Allen, James Williams and Billy Hart, whom he sees and respects as his great mentors.

He also has performed and recorded with many other world-famous jazz artists including the legendary Freddie Hubbard, Tom Harrell, Christian McBride, Regina Carter, Stefon Harris, Abbey Lincoln, Wynton Marsalis, Don Byron, Nat Adderley, Nicholas Payton, Jon Faddis, Jimmy Greene, Steve Turre, Al Foster and Jeremy Pelt.

Davis has worked with the Boy's Choir of Harlem as their musical director and also played keyboard for the television series "Cosby." His talent has been featured on more than 60 albums.

Davis is part of the Christian McBride Big Band and was featured on McBride's album The Good Feeling, which won a GRAMMY award in 2012.

As a bandleader, Davis has released two critically acclaimed albums – Dance of Life and The Innocence of Youth.

"The pianist 9 (Xavier Davis) simply knows how to make every note on his instrument sing, and he invariably finds the richest area of the keyboard for voicing his chords," Writer Bob Blumenthal said in the release.

In 2005, Davis became the first person to receive the prestigious New Works Grant twice from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation under the auspices of Chamber Music America. He has won awards at several festivals as well as in DownBeat magazine.

"Being a gifted composer, arranger and producer of music, he has composed and arranged music for outstanding artists like Carl Allen, Regina Carter and Hans Schuman," the release stated.

He has co-produced the album Wise Children by Tom Harrell and he recently produced the new album of singer Lizzie Thomas.

"He is also a passionate and experienced film and commercial music composer/producer," the release stated.

For additional information on Xavier Davis go to music.msu.edu/faculty/xavier-davis/ and www.xavierdavis.com.

This concert is presented in collaboration with Foundry Hall and is supported in part by Holtec-Palisades.

The Scott Club is located at 652 Pearl Street in South Haven.

RSVP is required by Oct 17.

The concert will be livestreamed on Scott Club Facebook page and the Foundry Hall Twitch channel at www.twitch.tv/foundryhall.

For more information, go to www.scottclub.org.

Michigan Maritime Museum to host Great Lakes pirate play

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The Michigan Maritime Museum will host a preview performance of the one-man play "Dan Seavey: Confessions of a Great Lakes Pirate."

According to a news release, the show will take place at 6 p.m. on Oct. 10.

The show is written and performed by actor, musician and tall ship sailor Tom Kastle and directed by Francisco Torres.

"This engaging production explores the extraordinary – and infamous – life of Dan Seavey (1865–1949), often regarded as the Great Lakes pirate," the release stated.

Seavey was a lumberman, businessman, Klondike gold miner, Navy veteran, saloon keeper, sailor, bootlegger and lawman, but his most notorious title was that of pirate.

"With humor, grit and reflection, Kastle brings Seavey to life as a complex figure: charming yet flawed, mischievous yet magnetic," the release stated. "The result is a performance that asks audiences to question whether they should cheer for, or fear, the pirate of the inland seas."

Kastle, well known for his maritime music and storytelling, has sailed tall ships around the world, including serving as Relief Captain in 2006 and Captain in 2007 of the museum's own tall ship Friends Good Will.

His career spans theater, film and television, including performances in "Man of La Mancha," "Shakespeare," "God Help Us!" with Ed Asner and an Emmy-nominated documentary on the Battle of Lake Erie.

Tickets are $10 for the general public and $5 for museum members. Seating is limited and advance reservations are encouraged.

This production is intended for adult and young adult audiences. It contains portrayals of drinking, violence and mild language – reflecting the realities of Seavey's pirate life – and is not recommended for children.

DIRECTOR

From page A1

fighting to attract volunteers, and the Michigan Maritime Museum has done both of those things so phenomenally that they've built a foundation where if you have the project, there's support for it.

So, as I was exploring my next chapter. I own and ran a very successful company, but as my company continued to grow and we continued to take on more historically significant spaces, my staff was over 200 and they were really running the show and I wanted to get back to basics and really see if I could take a wonderful museum and turn it into a center for education and excellence statewide.

I began looking for where those opportunities could be. I interviewed with several Smithsonian affiliates, I was offered a job at the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania and what I kept coming back to was fit – it wasn't the right museum for me.

When I was invited out here to see the Michigan Maritime Museum, I almost instantly went, not only do I want to work here, and not only do I want to help light the next chapter for this amazing 53-year-old museum, but I want to be part of this community and live in this place and have sort of the package that this area offers.

We also here at the museum have one of the finest on-water fleets anywhere in the country for on-water experiences. Then we have a museum that has expanded rapidly in the last several years, thanks to an amazing fundraising campaign.

It feels like this wonderful moment on the starting block, where I think the community is going to start seeing a lot of programming from us, a lot of opportunities for them to come and learn and engage. Everything from coming and learning how to make a traditional 1810 sailor's bag under expert (guidance) from some of the best dressmakers in historic costumers in the nation to learning about invasive species and commercial fishing and water ecology and the history of the Chicago World's Fair. I can't imagine another museum where all of that is so possible.

So, I guess to sort of go back and answer your question: I came here because it's a place full of possibilities.

■ What got you started on this career path?

I actually started out as an automotive designer for General Motors and was designing Cadillacs and later Chevies for over a decade. During that time, being a born-and-bred Detroiter, I would take a lot of people on trips. I would show people the city. You know, General Motors would bring in people from all over the world to work and often I would make sure that they had an experience of the city.

That grew into a company called Detroit History Tours after the GM bankruptcy and having to find a sort of new career for myself. Detroit History Tours has continued to grow and now we're the largest privately held educational history company in the American Midwest. We see about 20,000 guests a year. We also run a lot of historic sites – like we provide all of the tours for the Fisher Theatre, Michigan Central Station and Historic Fort Wayne. We program and work for those places to help support their fundraising, but also offer educational led tours through the spaces.

That has continued to grow. There's now a second sister company called the Detroit History Club, which does functions, celebrating these historic places. My love of history and my love of place and community building really grew out from my first 15 years with Detroit History Tours.

We continued to grow and continued to really find success. I built such a strong team there that they were able to kind of grow and I realized that I didn't only love the work, I loved the mentorship and bringing other people up in the field and the community that comes with carrying on the legacy of a location.

All of that sort of built into museum work, which I'm very, very proud to do. So, when this opportunity came around, it was sort of a no-brainer for me to promote one of my deputies into being executive director of Detroit History Tour and pack my bags and head west.

■ Do you have any specific goals or aspirations for the museum?

I have some pretty specific ones: programming and education. We're throwing the doors open. We're asking school groups to come. We want field trips. We want teachers coming to learn and taking that programming back to their classrooms. We have an innovation portal coming to make Michigan Maritime Museum statewide through our website where teachers will have resources, classroom programming and videos to support their in-class work.

My goal is that anyone in the state of Michigan who wants to learn about water, the maritime history of both inland and Great Lakes, Michigan maritime history, that we are a trusted and dedicated source that they know to turn to. This goes from kindergarteners to 110-year-olds. We want everyone to know they're welcome here.

■ How have you been settling into your position as executive director?

It's an adventure. So far, really good. It's interesting because we had a four-and-a-half month overlap. Patty's last day was yesterday. My first official day is today (Wednesday). So, it's been four months of sort of making my plans and figuring out how the copy machine works and some of the basics.

I'm really excited, today's kind of my launching off day and Patty put me in a great position, but I definitely have a different set of skills and goals and look forward to the next chapter being education focused.

■ What is your favorite part of working at the museum?

The people. From our volunteers and our on-water crew, our staff here is phenomenal and being in a place where others travel for vacation is a very unique privilege. It's not lost on the people here. It's this really wonderful experience of you know the person at the bank and you know the person at the restaurant and when you go to the gas station, it's the same guy every day and you say "hi." You know, I'm from a big city where that can't always be so true and so getting to have those experiences and meet so many amazing people, I think, has been a real big part of my first four months.

Just the community of supporters around this museum, you couldn't ask for a nicer group of humans to spend your time around.

■ Did you ever imagine that you would end up where you are now?

No, I never thought I'd leave Detroit. Born and raised, seventh-generation Detroiter. For me, Detroit is like how South Haven is for locals. I know everybody. I don't just know everybody, my mom knows everybody and my grandma knows everybody, so there's generations of familiarity. I never in a million years thought I would leave Detroit.

There's a lot I miss, but one of the great benefits of South Haven is it's a two-and-a-half hour drive. I try to either go home once every couple of weeks or my family comes out, so we're playing with that a bit.

Hard to be away from home, but in many ways, this is my chance to serve and in a weird way, I think of it a little bit like a deployment. It's worth being away from home if the mission is of value and this mission couldn't be more valuable. To turn this museum into an educational cornerstone for our region and our state, I mean, there are people who spend their whole careers dreaming of that opportunity. So, while it was very hard to leave, it was also the most obvious choice in the world to come here.

■ Do you have any special hobbies, talents or favorite activities?

I'm just laughing because we had a donor event a couple of weeks ago and my husband and I were there. Someone asked that of my husband, and he said, "Oh, yeah, she has a hobby – it's called work." I'm a workaholic, but happily and proudly. That old saying about if you love what you do, you don't work a day in your life. I work a lot and I enjoy it.

One of my hobbies is, I love building little scavenger hunts or games for people to play where they learn something in the process. So, sometimes I finish my workday and then I spend another two or three hours designing some little game that the middle school field trip can play. I love stuff like that. I love to draw and doodle, I think that just comes from my art background and coming out of automotive. So certainly I enjoy art and I'm excited about working with the South Haven Community Arts Foundation.

I wish I could be one of those wonderful people who says my hobby is cooking, but honestly, my hobby is eating. The food out here is too damn good.

I have a dog and a cat and a wonderful husband and I love being on the water. I'm a member of the Detroit Yacht Club. I'm a power boater, so any of that involvement is always great. It's funny, it sounds like such a boring existence, but it's a wonderful life. I read, I do art and I spend my days learning and teaching. What could be better?

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

South Haven Tribune CLASSIFIEDS

Classified Desk: 1-855-317-4292

Hours: Monday - Friday 9am-2pm EST

monster

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0900 LEGALS

NOTICE
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY INFORMATIONAL MEETING TO BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2025, NOON, DURING THE DDA MEETING

According to the Tax Increment Financing Act – Act 57 of 2018, semi-annually beginning January 1, 2019:

Authorities must hold two "informational meetings" for the purpose of informing the public of the goals and direction of the authority, including projects to be undertaken in the coming year. The meetings are not for the purpose of voting on policy, budgets or other operational matters. Reference PA 57, Sec. 910

· The informational meetings may be held in conjunction with other public meetings of the authority or municipality.

Informational Meeting held on Monday, November 3, 2025, City Council Meeting will be meeting #1 of the requirements of 2018 PA 57. Meeting #2 will be held on November 5, 2025, at the Downtown Development Authority monthly meeting.

0900 LEGALS

SOUTH HAVEN CHARTER TOWNSHIP VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Zoning Board of Appeals of South Haven Charter Township will hold a public hearing and regular meeting at the South Haven Township Hall 09761 Blue Star Hwy on Thursday October 23, 2025, 6:30pm for the following variance applications:

Natalie Thompson has petitioned for dimensional variances to construct a detached garage at 75746 14th Ave (80-17-022-049-00). Required side setback is 15ft; request is for 8ft of relief (7ft from property line). Also required 10ft from the house; request is for 5ft of relief (to be 5ft from house). Scott and Karine Whiteford have petitioned for a dimensional variance to construct a roofed over porch at 74764 24th Ave (80-17-084-075-00). Required side setback is 10ft; request is for 5ft of relief (to be 5ft from property line). that the application can be reviewed at the Township Hall during the zoning administrator hours Tues's 9-12p and Thurs's 1:30-4p or call 269-637-3305 / 1-800-626-5964 or request by email shtwp.zoninga@gmail.com. Written comment may also be submitted to the zoning administrator.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that written comments may be submitted to the Township Clerk at the address set forth below, during regular business hours of regular business days or by mail at the address set forth below, up to the date of the hearing and will also be accepted by the Planning Commission at the hearing. South Haven Charter Township will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services to individuals with disabilities at the hearing upon seven (7) days' notice to the South Haven Charter Township Clerk.

South Haven Charter Twp Hall
Brenda Bertorelli, Clerk
09761 Blue Star Highway
South Haven, MI 49090
269-637-3305

Classifieds Make A Cash Connection!

Notice of Reschedule of a Regular Van Buren Conservation District Meeting

To all residents and landowners of Van Buren County, notice is hereby given that the Van Buren Conservation District's (VBCD) regularly scheduled October 22, 2025, board meeting to begin at 10:00 AM has been rescheduled to October 22, 2025, to begin at 9:00 AM. The meeting will occur on the same day as previously scheduled but will begin earlier than previously posted. The October 22, 2025, VBCD Board Meeting will be held at 9:00 AM at the Van Buren Conservation District office (1035 E Michigan Ave., Paw Paw, MI 49079).

The meeting agendas can be accessed at https://vanburencd.org.

Upon request to the District Executive Director, the District shall make reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities to be able to participate in this meeting. If you have any questions, please call 269-657-4030 x5 or email info@vanburencd.org

NOTICE OF REGISTRATION FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION TO BE HELD ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2025, COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP, VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN
TO THE QUALIFIED ELECTORS OF COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP:

Please take notice that any qualified elector of Columbia Township who is not already registered, may register to vote at the office of the Township Clerk; the office of the County Clerk; a Secretary of State branch office, or other designated state agency.

Registration forms can also be obtained at www.mi.gov/vote and submitted online or printed & mailed to the Township Clerk.

The last day to register in any manner other than in-person with the local clerk is Monday, October 20, 2025. After this date, anyone who qualifies as an elector may register to vote in person with proof of residency (MCL 168.492) at the Columbia Township Clerk's Office, located at: Columbia Township Hall | 53053 CR 388, Grand Junction, MI 49056 through 8:00 p.m. on Election Day, Tuesday, November 4, 2025.

PROPOSAL TO BE VOTED ON

District Library

Van Buren District Library Millage Renewal Shall the Van Buren District Library, County of Van Buren, be authorized to levy a millage annually in an amount not to exceed

.1984 mill ($0.1984 per $1,000 of taxable value), which is a renewal of the millage rate that was last levied in 2024, against all taxable property within the Van Buren District Library district for a period of ten (10) years, 2025 through 2034, inclusive, for the purpose of providing funds for all district library purposes authorized by law.

The estimate of the revenue the Van Buren District Library will collect if the millage is approved and levied by the Van Buren District Library in the first year (2025) is approximately $484,000. To the extent required by law, a portion of the revenues from this millage will be captured within the district and disbursed to the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority of Van Buren County. Pursuant to Funding and Reciprocal Borrowing Agreements, 75% of the millage revenues received from Porter Township will be disbursed to the Village of Lawton Public Library and 10% of the millage revenues received from Bangor Township will be disbursed to the Hartford Public Library.

POLLING PLACE

The polls will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the following location:

Columbia Township Hall | 53053 CR 388, Grand Junction, MI 49056

All polling locations are accessible to voters with disabilities. A voter who is physically unable to attend the polls without assistance may contact the clerk's office for information regarding absentee voting.

Kara Hartmann Laraway, Columbia Township Clerk
53053 CR 388, Grand Junction, MI 49056
269-434-6227, clerk@columbiatwp.com Hall Hours: M-F, 9a-1p

PUBLIC/LEGAL NOTICES

To place a public notice, please send your requests to **legals@pmginmi.com.**

Please allow 48 hours to process, larger legals may need at least four business days.

NOTICE OF ADOPTION OF ORDINANCE TOWNSHIP OF CASCO, ALLEGAN COUNTY, MICHIGAN

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that at its September 22, 2025, meeting, the Board of Casco Township adopted Ordinance No. ____, the Anti-Noise and Public Nuisance Ordinance (the "Ordinance"). The following provides a summary of the Ordinance. This Notice and the summary are intended to meet the publication requirements contained in Michigan law. The Ordinance shall be effective 30 days after publication.

A copy of the Ordinance may be purchased or inspected by any person at the Casco Township office at 7104 – 107th Avenue, South Haven, Michigan 49090 (Telephone: 269-637-4441), on Tuesdays between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Wednesdays between 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., and Thursdays between 9:00 a.m. and noon, except holidays. The Ordinance will also be available for viewing on the Township's website, which is: http://www.cascotownship.info.

ORDINANCE NO.____
ANTI-NOISE AND PUBLIC NUISANCE

AN ORDINANCE TO RESTATE AND REPLACE ORDINANCE NO. 041717 TO SECURE THE PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY, AND GENERAL WELFARE OF THE RESIDENTS AND PROPERTY OWNERS OF CASCO TOWNSHIP, ALLEGAN COUNTY, MICHIGAN, BY THE REGULATION OF NOISE WITHIN THE TOWNSHIP AND TO PRESCRIBE THE PENALTIES FOR THE VIOLATION OF THE ORDINANCE.

Section 1 of the Ordinance designates its title.
Section 2 of the Ordinance states certain definitions.
Section 3 of the Ordinance designates anti-noise regulations.
Section 4 of the Ordinance addresses the penalty for violations.
Section 5 of the Ordinance describes its severability.
Section 6 of the Ordinance addresses administrative liability.
Section 7 of the Ordinance discusses the repeal of other ordinances.
Section 8 of the Ordinance addresses publication and effective date.

Dated: September 22, 2025 Rachel Ridley, Clerk
Casco Township

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SECURITY

From page A1

allegedly drove his truck into the side of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Grand Blanc Township Sunday morning and set it on fire, killing four people and wounding eight. He was shot and killed by law enforcement who arrived on the scene.

Asher Lopatin, the rabbi at Kehillat Etz Chayim in Oak Park and the director of community relations for the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor, said many synagogues have "camera towers" that watch over everyone who goes near the building, and all large synagogues have security guards during services.

But some leaders said it isn't as easy as simply locking their doors and having security teams in place.

Two leaders said they don't want to lock the doors to their churches because they also want to be welcoming – a challenge some university leaders have faced in the aftermath of mass shootings such as the one at Michigan State University in 2023.

Episcopal Diocese of Michigan Bishop Bonnie A. Perry said she doesn't want people to "not be able ... to come in."

"I want us to be safe, and I want us to be welcoming," Perry said.

Houses of worship use cameras

The mass shooting and fire at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on McCandlish Road in Grand Blanc Township happened a little less than four months after a thwarted attack at a church in Wayne in late June.

Identified as Brian Anthony Browning, a man dressed in tactical gear and armed with multiple weapons, including an AR-15, drove up to CrossPointe Community Church in Wayne, Mich., and started firing before he was run over and later fatally shot by a member of the church's security team. Browning's mother was a member of CrossPointe, and he had attended services there a few times before the attack.

A 2023 report by the A-Mark Foundation found that 59 violent attacks targeted congregants, staff and clergy at U.S. houses of worship between Jan. 1, 2012, and Dec. 31, 2022, resulting in 79 deaths and 83 injuries.

Speaking at a Monday press conference in Grand Blanc Township, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer said her heart was "breaking" at another mass shooting "in a place that is supposed to be defined by togetherness."

"These are places that we go to feel connected, to feel safe, to be together," Whitmer said. "But today, this place has been shattered by bullets and broken glass. ... We cannot keep living our lives like this."

The Grand Blanc Police Department said Tuesday they plan to increase patrols at churches in the aftermath of Sunday's tragic attack.

"During church service hours, our officers will be patrolling the parking lots of churches throughout the city to provide additional security and peace of mind," the department said in a Facebook post.

For Dulworth and his congregation at St. Paul's, it was the mass shootings at Oxford High School in 2021 and MSU in 2023 that really prompted the United Methodist church in Rochester to think about its security. Some members of his congregation were affected by the tragedies, he said.

"It's one after another of these types of mass shootings, not only in schools and in public … but in places of worship as well, that we're experiencing – and the second in recent years here in the Michigan area as well," Dulworth said.

He said St. Paul's has been "continually" looking at its security measures, but the church completed a capital campaign pledge drive last spring. Some of that money will be spent on technology and security upgrades.

Dulworth said the new security cameras now are being installed on the outside of the church, which helps the staff better monitor who is coming and going from the facility. They used to only have intercom cameras.

The security system, which includes cameras and alarms, cost around $30,000, Dulworth said. St. Paul's is also planning to have its staff and volunteers do an updated active shooter training, he said.

The church also has a preschool, so it makes sure its doors are locked when preschool is in session. People have to come into the building through designated entrances.

Protocols for emergencies

Perry, the bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan, said churches in the diocese have protocols in place for emergencies, including environmental, medical and behavioral emergencies. A shooting would count as a behavioral one.

She said the protocols for behavioral emergencies depend on how large the church is, its floor plan and other factors.

"I've little, tiny places out in the country – they don't have security cameras. So … it's going to be principle-driven and contextually specific," she said of the protocols.

Perry said the churches with security cameras tend to be churches that "have more money."

CAIR-MI's Walid said his organization encourages the use of surveillance cameras. If "any strange behavior" occurs around congregations, he recommended letting CAIR know immediately and contacting law enforcement.

Walid said that in a lot of attacks against houses of worship of various faiths, the perpetrators do "some sort of surveillance and/or intelligence gathering" before the attack.

Other security measures

Walid said he called the leadership of the Grand Blanc Islamic Center Monday morning. He said the congregation already has security measures, and they will remain in place. Walid noted that they have "not received any threats."

"Given the volatile political rhetoric … that's been going in our country in recent years, most mosques in the state of Michigan have armed security or some sort of security measures … during prayer times to guard against something like what just took place at the Church of Jesus Christ and the Latter Day Saints," he said.

Walid recommended that houses of worship make contact and form relationships with their local police departments or sheriff's offices. He said in many cases, police departments step up patrols around mosques during times of worship, including in the month of Ramadan.

When asked if it's necessary to have armed security, Walid said it "depends on the locality of where the houses of worship are."

"But generally speaking, it's better to have armed security, especially in this particular time where there is anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric that is seep(ing) into the language environment of our country," he said.

Armed security personnel

Mosques aren't the only houses of worship with armed security.

Bishop Corletta Vaughn of Holy Ghost Cathedral in Detroit said that at every Sunday service and event at the church, there are armed security personnel who are church members. There also are hospitality people at each event – volunteers who greet people coming into the church.

At a certain time during the Sunday service, they lock the front doors and redirect traffic to the side doors. This allows there to be one main entrance "that we can really watch," Vaughn said.

The locking of the doors and the security detail – along with cameras on the outside of the building – were measures adopted after the shooting at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, S.C., in 2015 that killed nine people.

Vaughn said people aren't expecting church to "be a dangerous place," so they are "not as on guard" and are friendlier. She said there is now "a little bit more of a tightening up" of who comes into the building, and there is more observation than before.

"We would welcome you, and you would come in and, you know, we would just love on you," Vaughn described how things were before. "But now, it's a little different."

For southeast Michigan's Catholic community, which has about 900,000 members, every Catholic parish and school in the archdiocese has a campus safety plan in place, "developed in partnership with local law enforcement," said Fournier, the archdiocese spokeswoman.

"These plans are tailored to fit the specific needs of each community but may include common safety measures such as having staff and volunteers undergo training on emergency protocols and making local law enforcement aware of community events," she said.

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SOUTH HAVEN COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Ongoing events

Visually impaired and blind persons support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of the month at 1 p.m. at Senior Services of Van Buren County.

Dementia and Alzheimer's caregivers support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church library.

Three Blondes Brewing: Trivia night on Thursdays at 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. and Sundays at 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.

Sparkle and Spice Boutique: Mom and Me play date. Fridays from 9-10 a.m.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for adults from 6-8 p.m. on the first and third Wednesday of the month. Artists of any level can bring their own projects to work on. Basic art supplies will be available. Attendees must be 18 years old and over. Members are free, non-members cost $5.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for ages 9 to 13 from 4-5:30 p.m. every Wednesday. Young artists are invited to create art at their own pace with an instructor to help guide as needed. Free workshop but a $10 donation is suggested to help cover cost of supplies.

South Haven Center for the Arts: "Altered Consumerism" exhibition from Aug. 8 through Sept. 20.

Candlelight Yoga: Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Church of Epiphany. Cost is $15.

Food pantry: First Congregational Church open from 10 a.m. to noon on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. It is a drive-up food pantry.

Food pantry: Sacred Heart Catholic Church. For Bangor residents only. Open from 1-4 p.m. on Thursdays.

Food, clothing, baby pantry: Lily of the Valley Church in Covert. Open from noon to 2 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Personal care and clothing pantry: First Assembly of God open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Peace Lutheran Church open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Simpson United Methodist Church in Bangor. Open from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays. Must call the central office to register.

South Haven Memorial Library: Story Time on 11 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays.

South Haven Farm Market: Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. through October at Huron Street Pavilion.

HawksHead: Pasta on the Patio every Wednesday at 5 p.m.

Michigan Maritime Museum: Hands-on the Harbor every Thursday at 10:30 a.m.

Lake Arvesta: Summer at the pasture concert every Friday and Saturday at 6 p.m.

Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: New Exhibit – "The Adventures of Liberty Hyde Bailey – Chicago: 1872." Available during museum hours: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday.

Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: "Stepping Stones" by Carol Trembath and David W. Craig Pawis-Steckley Storywalk. Available through Sept. 31.

Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: "The Gift of Mnoomin" by Brittany Luby and Joshua Mangeshig Pawis-Steckley Storywalk. Available from Oct. 1 through 31.

Lakeside Social Bowling Alley: Glow Bowl every Friday from noon to 9 p.m.

Bridge – Chicago Scoring: noon on Tuesdays. Lakeside Entertainment, 9921 Blue Star Memorial Highway, South Haven.

Bridge – Duplicate Scoring: 1 pm on Wednesdays. Lakeside Entertainment, 9921 Blue Star Memorial Highway, South Haven.

October

6 – Soccer: Boys middle school against Fennville at 5 p.m.

6 – Volleyball: Girls middle school against coloma at 5:30 p.m.

6 – Covert Branch Library: After school art workshop for grades 6 to 12 from 3 to 5 p.m.

7 – Rotary Club: US Tarp will present and Clark Gruber is program chair.

7 – Volleyball: Girls junior varsity against Fennville at 5:30 p.m.

7 – Volleyball: Girls freshman against Fennville at 5:30 p.m.

7 – Volleyball: Girls varsity against Fennville at 6:30 p.m.

9 – Volleyball: Girls varsity against Berrien Springs at 1 p.m.

Photo provided / Tom Renner

Kaitlyn Moore fires off a kill in a recent match where the South Haven Rams defeat Coloma High School in three sets.

9- Volleyball: Girls junior varsity against Berrien Springs at 2 p.m.

9 – Football: Boys junior varsity against Kalamazoo Christian at 6 p.m. at Ratcliffe Field.

9 – Fire Safety Fun Night: From 5 to 7 p.m. at the department's Station 3 on Blue Star Memorial Highway. Free event with live demonstrations, prizes and refreshments.

9 – South Haven Young Professionals: monthly networking event from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. a Gravity Winery.

10 – Bumbleberry Acres: Date Night on the Farm from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Adults only. $20 for individuals, $30 for couples.

10 – South Haven Memorial Library: Bevin Cohen will host teas, tinctures and oils craft event at 4 p.m. Learn how to make salves, balms and tinctures using local herbs.

10 – Michigan Maritime Museum: Special preview performance of "Dan Seavey: Confessions of a Great Lakes Pirate at 6 p.m.

11 – Bangor Community Fire Department: Touch a Truck from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

11 – DeGrandchamp Farms: Cranberry Harvest Days from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Take a trolley ride out to the bogs, view the packing facility, food tastings games and more.

12 – First Congregational UCC: Fall Concert Series featuring Serita's Black Rose Duo at 3 p.m.

13 – South Haven Memorial Library: Author event with Michigan author Mark Love at 6 p.m. Includes a discussion on his books, writing process, characters and a book signing.

13 – South Haven Garden Club: Making herbal smudges at First Congregational Church.

14 – Rotary Club: South Haven Public Schools Superintendent Ana Aleman-Putman will present and Dene Hadden is program chair.

14 – South Haven Memorial Library: South haven Strummers from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Bring your own ukulele.

14 – Swimming: Girls varsity against Plainwell at 6 p.m.

15 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

16 – Volleyball: Girls middle school against Bridgeman at 5:30 p.m.

16 – South Haven Speaker Series: Dr. Marci Rosselle-McCarthy will present a lecture on the world's economy.

17 – Football: Boys varsity against Allegan at 7 p.m. at Ratcliffe Field.

17 – South Haven Public Schools: Homecoming Golf Cart Parade at 5:30 p.m. Carts will line up at Black River Book Store.

17 – South Haven Memorial Library: Messy play Fridays for preschoolers from 11 a.m. -noon.

18 – South Haven Memorial Library: Halloween Party from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

19 – Scott Club: Jazz Pianist Xavier Davis presents "An Afternoon of Jazz." Free concert, RSVP required.

20 – Volleyball: Girls middle school against Saugatuck at 5:30 p.m.

21 – Rotary Club: Evening meeting at the American Legion beginning at 5 p.m. Managing Director of the Van Buren County Road Commission Bret Witowski will present and Dan Thompson is the program chair.

24 – Football: Boys varsity against Galesburg-Augusta at 7 p.m. at Ratcliffe Field.

24 – South Haven Memorial Library: South Haven Writers read-around. New writers welcome from 1 to 4 p.m.

25 – South Haven Memorial Library: Astronomy Club at 11 a.m. Registration is recommended.

26 – Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: Pumpkin Boo-Walk starting at 6:45 p.m.

28 – South Haven Young Professionals: Coffee Connections from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. at The Flying Saucer.

28 – Rotary Club: Club Assembly and Rotary President Amy Nichols to present.

29 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

30 – South Haven Tri-M Music Honor Society: Halloween Carnival rom 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the South Haven High School gym.

30 – First Baptist Church: Pumpkinfest from 6:30 to 8 p.m. on the gym. Free event with games, activities and candy.

31 – Goody's Wash N' Go: Trunk or Treat from 4 to 6 p.m.

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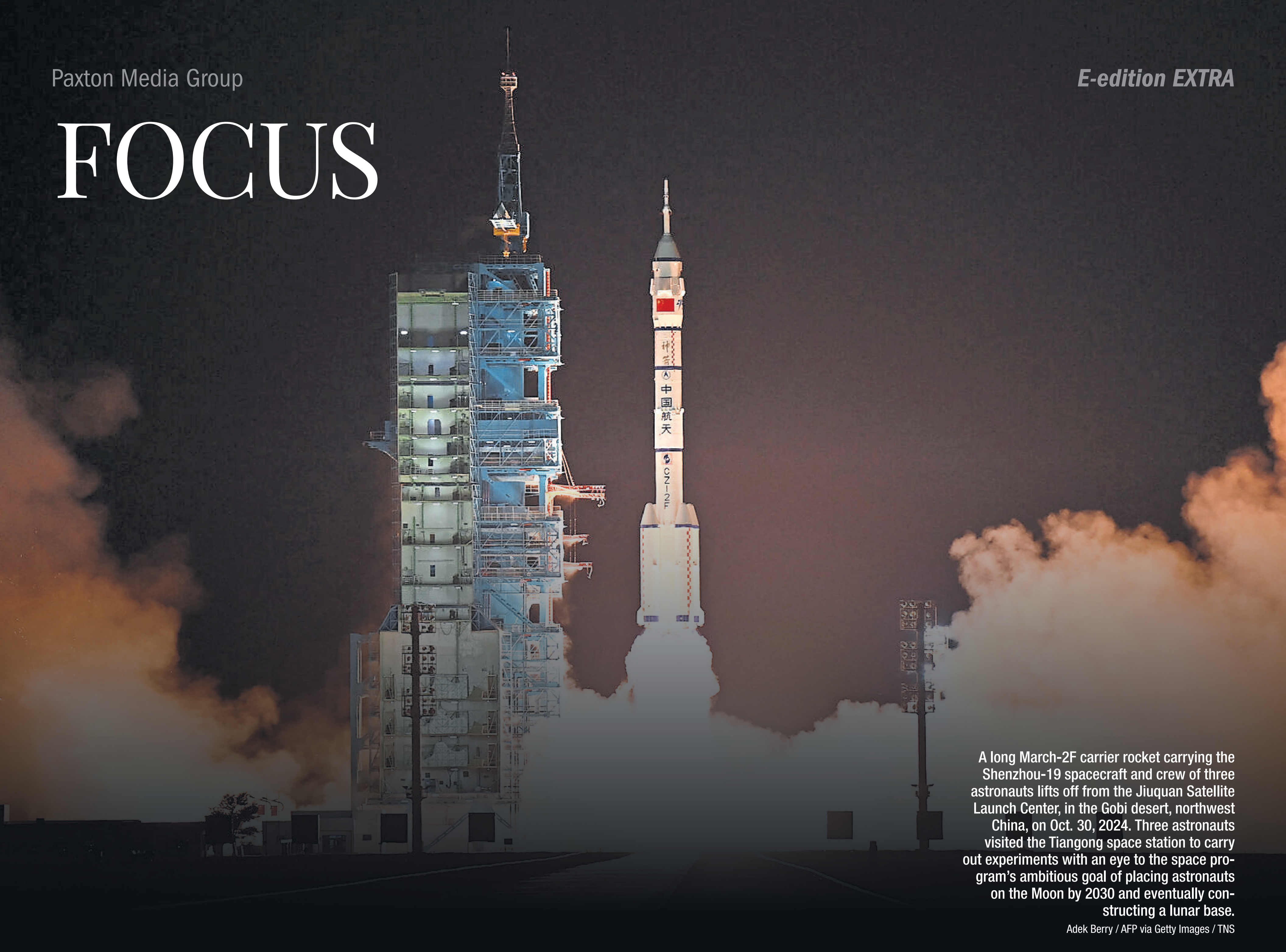

A long March-2F carrier rocket carrying the Shenzhou-19 spacecraft and crew of three astronauts lifts off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center, in the Gobi desert, northwest China, on Oct. 30, 2024. Three astronauts visited the Tiangong space station to carry out experiments with an eye to the space program's ambitious goal of placing astronauts on the Moon by 2030 and eventually constructing a lunar base.

Adek Berry / AFP via Getty Images / TNS

In a race back to the moon, U.S. and China see a fast-approaching finish line

By MICHAEL WILNER
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

WASHINGTON — Early in his first term, President Donald Trump held a modest ceremony directing NASA to return humans to the moon for the first time in 50 years. It was a goalpost set without a road map. Veterans of the space community reflected on the 2017 document, conspicuously silent on budgets and timelines, equivocating between excitement and concern.

Was Trump setting up a giveaway to special interests in the aerospace community? Or was he setting forth a real strategic vision for the coming decade, to secure American leadership in the heavens?

It was a return to a plan first proposed by President George W. Bush in 2004, then abandoned by President Barack Obama in 2010, asserting the moon as a vital part of American ambitions in space. Whether to return to the lunar surface at all – or skip it to focus on Mars – was a long-standing debate governing the division of resources at NASA, where every project is precious, holding extraordinary promise for the knowledge of mankind, yet requiring consistent, high-dollar funding commitments from a capricious Congress.

Eight years on, the debate is over. Trump's policy shift has blazed a new American trail in space – and spawned an urgent race with China that is fast approaching the finish line.

Both nations are in a sprint toward manned missions to the lunar surface by the end of this decade, with sights on 2029 as a common deadline – marking the end of Trump's presidency and, in China, the 80th anniversary of the People's Republic.

It is a far different race from the original, against the Soviet Union, when U.S. astronauts inspired the world with a televised landing in 1969. This time, Washington would not just plant a flag and return its astronauts home. Instead, the Americans plan to stay, establishing a lunar base that would test humanity's ability to live beyond Earth.

China has similar plans. And with both countries aiming for the same strategic area of the surface – the south pole of the moon, where peaks of eternal light shine alongside crevices of permanent darkness, believed to store frozen water – the stakes of the race are grounded in national security. Whichever nation establishes a presence there first could lay claim to the region for themselves.

Advocates of the U.S. effort, called the Artemis program, increasingly fear that delays at NASA and its private sector partners, coupled with proposed funding cuts to NASA from the Trump administration, could ensure China's victory in a race with broad consequences for U.S. interests.

So it is a race that Trump started. The question is whether he can finish it.

While U.S. intelligence officials have assessed that Beijing is on track to meet its goals, NASA veterans say that accomplishing a manned mission before the Chinese appears increasingly out of reach.

"It's a stretch," said G. Scott Hubbard, a leader in human space exploration for the last half-century who served as NASA's first "Mars czar" and former director of the Ames Research Center in Mountain View, Calif. "Bottom line, yes, it is doable. It'll take an intense effort by the best engineers, and appropriate funding."

"It's not inconceivable," he added.

The White House said Trump is committed to making "American leadership in space great again," noting his first-term push to return U.S. astronauts to the moon and his efforts to deregulate the U.S. space industry. But officials declined to comment on a timeline for the mission or on China's steady progress.

"Being first and beating China to the moon matters because it sets the rules of the road," Sean Duffy, Transportation secretary and acting NASA administrator, told The Times. "We're committed to doing this right – safely, peacefully, and ahead of strategic competitors – because American leadership on the moon secures our future in space."

The success of the Artemis program, Duffy said, is about ensuring the United States leads in space for generations to come. "Those who lead in space lead on Earth," he added.

NASA officials, granted anonymity to speak candidly, expressed concern that while leadership on the Artemis program has remained relatively stable, talent on robotics and in other key areas has left the agency at a critical time in the race, with potentially less than two years to go before China launches its first robotic mission to the south pole – a scout, of sorts, for a manned landing to follow.

A proposal to cut NASA research funding by roughly 47 percent has gripped officials there with doubt, jeopardizing a sense of job security at the agency and destabilizing a talent pipeline that could prove critical to success.

In the 1960s, the federal government increased spending on NASA to 4.4 percent of GDP to secure victory in the first space race.

"There's too much uncertainty," one NASA official said, raising the specter of the Trump administration impounding funds for the agency even if Congress continues to fund it.

Inside NASA headquarters, Hubbard said, "the feeling right now is terrified uncertainty – everyone is walking on eggshells."

"They're treading water," he added. "People want to be given clear direction, and they're not getting it."

China's long march gets closer

Beijing conducted a series of tests over the last several weeks viewed in Washington as crucial milestones for China on its journey to the moon.

A launch of its Lanyue lander, equipped to carry two taikonauts to the lunar surface, "validated" its landing and takeoff system, state media reported. Two subsequent tests of China's Long March 10, a super-heavy lift rocket designed to jump-start the mission, were a "complete success," according to the China Manned Space Agency.

Unlike in the United States, China's manned space flight program is housed within its military.

"We have seen them steadily progress on all of the various pieces that they are going to need," said Dean Cheng, senior advisor to the China program at the U.S. Institute of Peace.

"You need a vehicle to launch, because current rockets simply don't have enough throw-weight. They're testing the lander to carry astronauts to the surface," Cheng said. "These are key pieces, and significant advances – this is a brand new rocket and a lunar lander with new technology."

China initially set a goal for its manned mission by 2035, but has since moved up its plans, an expression of confidence from Beijing and an unusual break from typical party protocol. Now, China aims not only to have completed that mission, but to begin establishing an International Lunar Research Station on its surface, in conjunction with Russia, by 2030.

They are expected to target the south pole.

"There's room for two powers under schemes of coordination, but there's not room in an uncoordinated environment. There can easily be a competition for resources," said Thomas González Roberts, an assistant professor of international affairs and aerospace engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology.

Landing and takeoff of spacecraft on the moon will kick up lunar dust and rocks, risking the safety of astronauts on the ground and sensitive equipment across a base site – considerations that are likely driving Beijing's strategy to get there first. Those enjoying the benefits of first arrival could set up generous routes for rovers, equipment at dig sites for deposits, telecommunication assets, and even a nuclear reactor to assert a large area of domain.

Since his first term, Trump and his aides have sought to avoid a showdown on the lunar surface, drafting a new set of international rules to govern an otherwise untamed frontier. The Artemis Accords "set out a practical set of principles to guide space exploration," according to the State Department. President Biden embraced and extended the initiative, growing the list of signatories to 56 nations.

But China is not one of them, prohibited by Congress during the Obama era from cooperating with the United States in space after attempting to steal U.S. technology on intercontinental ballistic missiles and thermonuclear weapons. Instead, Beijing has recruited a small list of countries to join its lunar base program, including Russia, Venezuela, Pakistan, Egypt, Nicaragua, Belarus and South Africa.

"I don't think there will be extreme congestion on the moon, but if you really define an area of interest – and there is that, with these peaks of eternal light next to permanently shadowed regions – you could manufacture congestion," Roberts added.

"How do you benefit from obfuscation?" he asked. "If you're the first arrival, you spread yourself out."

The promise and burden of Musk's Starship

Last month, Duffy warned NASA staff that the Trump administration suspects Beijing is planning to deliver a nuclear reactor to power a long-term presence at its lunar base by 2029.

The move, Duffy said, could allow China to "declare a keep-out zone, which would significantly inhibit the United States from establishing a planned Artemis presence if not there first." He ordered the agency to collect proposals by October on delivering a U.S. reactor to the surface no later than that year.

The administration's success relies on a man whose relationship with Trump has crashed spectacularly to Earth.

Starship, a super heavy-lift launch vehicle produced by Elon Musk's SpaceX, is the rocket Trump is relying on to accomplish the Artemis mission. Yet repeated setbacks in the Starship program have raised alarm at NASA over its fundamental constitution. A concerning series of tests have already delayed the U.S. manned launch, known as Artemis III, toward the end of Trump's term.

Last month, in its 10th test flight, the rocket finally succeeded in a suborbital mission. But "Starship has yet to reach orbit," Hubbard said, "and once it reaches orbit, they've got to demonstrate microgravity transfer of cryogenic propellant."

"That's something that's never been done before," he added. "So to say that they'll be ready to do all of that in two years is a real stretch."

Setbacks are common course in the history of the U.S. space program. But the success of China's recent tests has shown the Trump administration that NASA and its partners have run out of time for further delays.

Duffy said that Artemis II, a manned mission to orbit the moon, will take place early next year, overcoming a separate set of design flaws that faced Lockheed Martin's Orion spacecraft. Artemis III would keep astronauts on the surface for more than a week and deliver payloads to help begin the foundation of a base.

Whether the Trump administration will commit to the funding and leadership necessary for the mission is an open question. The White House declined to say who within the West Wing is leading the effort. Trump has not named a permanent NASA administrator for Senate confirmation.

Success on the moon is meant to provide a testing ground and a launching pad for more ambitious, challenging manned missions to Mars. But Trump's commitment to those ventures are equally in doubt. The administration has proposed canceling funds for a landmark program decades in the making to return samples from the red planet, despite a NASA announcement earlier this month revealing it had discovered signs of ancient Martian life.

"I've been on the inside of it – you waste enormous amounts of time just trying to find workarounds to get funding in to stay on schedule," Hubbard said. "If you really, really want to beat the Chinese, give NASA the funding and some stability – because you're not going to beat them if every day, week or month, there's a different direction, a different budget, a different administrator."

"And China may still win," he said, adding: "It would be another claim that they're the dominant power in the world."

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Karl Merton Ferron / The Baltimore Sun / TNS

A rosary, adorned with a crucifix and replica of the St. Benedict Medal which is for sale at the St. Benedict Center, on Sept. 16 Saint Benedict is often invoked in exorcisms and is known for his power over demons, particularly through the Saint Benedict Medal.

Decades after the hit horror film, demand for exorcists on the rise

By JONATHAN M. PITTS
The Baltimore Sun (TNS)

BALTIMORE — She levitates above her chair. An old man hurls a priest across the room. A young woman speaks full paragraphs in Bulgarian, a language she's never studied. A man's skin blisters at the sight of a crucifix.

In interviews with The Baltimore Sun, exorcists claimed these are not movie scenes but moments they've witnessed firsthand. And what's more, requests from the public to undergo the ancient ritual are multiplying.

Today, more than 50 years after Linda Blair's head spun in the hit film "The Exorcist" and nearly 15 years after the Catholic Church convened its first U.S. seminar on exorcism in Baltimore, the priests who claim to do battle with demons are in more demand than ever.

At the time of that Baltimore meeting, about two dozen exorcists practiced in the United States; today, it has more than six times that amount.

"We're getting more and more people needing an exorcism," said Monsignor Stephen Rossetti, a Washington, D.C.-based priest who has been conducting the solemn religious rite for more than 20 years. "There are only about 150 exorcists in the country, and they are being flooded with requests, including from many desperate people pleading for assistance. We can't keep up with the demand now – and it's only going to get worse."

As anyone who has seen "The Exorcist," the 1973 psychological thriller by director William Friedkin, knows, an exorcism is a prayer encounter in which a trained clergyman calls on the power of the Holy Spirit to dispel a demonic entity or entities believed to be harassing, oppressing, or possessing the bodies of human beings.

In the Christian worldview, the Devil is an angel who was expelled from heaven for rebelling against God's will. Christians also believe an array of demons – lesser but similarly rebellious spiritual figures – were cast out along with Satan, and that the dark figures work together to sever the connections between human beings and their creator.

"What's an exorcism? It's breaking your relationship with the devil or an evil spirit," said the Most Rev. Thomas Paprocki, the Bishop of the Diocese of Springfield, Illinois, who organized and helped run the landmark Baltimore symposium.

The movie showed that the process can be terrifying and dangerous. Filmgoers saw Blair as Regan McNeil, the 12-year-old victim of demonic possession, spit bile, spew curses in Latin, levitate, throw a priest across the room, and in a moment that made movie history,

A replica of the St. Benedict Medal as well as the obverse of the pendant are displayed in front of a small item with the likeness of Saint Benedict, a Christian monk which is for sale at the St. Benedict Center. Saint Benedict is often invoked in exorcisms and is known for his power over demons, particularly through the Saint Benedict Medal.

grin maniacally as her head whirled around 360 degrees. Exorcists claim these moments reflect the very real battle between good and evil.

Exorcists interviewed for this story said their screening process shows that more than 99 percent of those who claim possession are suffering from a mental illness. Even when a demonic presence is discerned, it's rarely as severe as the one portrayed in the movie.

"While most cases are not as intense as the 1973 movie, there are wild things that occasionally happen," said Rossetti, a licensed psychologist and the author of exorcist books, including "Diary of an American Exorcist" (2021) and "My Confrontation With Hell."

"Objects do get thrown across the room; people do vomit up strange objects; they do speak in demonic voices, often have superhuman strength and can have occult knowledge and communicate in foreign languages."

Sudden temperature drops also happen, he added, and victims do react strongly to holy water and other sacred objects. He has seen a few levitate.

"These sorts of things happen, but not daily," said Rossetti, who participates in up to 20 exorcisms of varying intensities per week, often at the St. Michael Center for Spiritual Renewal in Washington, the ministry of deliverance he founded 24 years ago.

The center serves individuals who reside within the Archdiocese of Washington, regardless of their religious affiliation. The territory includes Montgomery, Prince George's, Calvert, Charles and St. Mary's counties in Maryland.

The Archdiocese of Baltimore, like the vast majority of the nation's 173 dioceses, has a team of individuals trained to conduct exorcisms, but Christian Kendzierski, a spokesman for the archdiocese, said officials declined to comment due to the sensitivity of the topic.

Few who conduct or view the ritual are eager to discuss it, and the church generally shields the process from the tabloids. But some cases are inherently sensational, such as when Rossetti sought to liberate a woman he calls "C," who had been cursed by self-described witches.

After Rossetti and his team prayed over her, he recalled, she "vomited up an ugly, thick, black liquid" – and hours later, a text message appeared on her phone: "You'll have [a] migraine all night for throwing me up, b–ch."

Rossetti favors sharing such experiences to bring the service to wider attention at a time when, in his view, the American public has become far less committed to formal faith practices. In addition to his books, he keeps a blog on his exploits and conducts an online deliverance prayer session with attendees from more than 50 countries.

Shrieking cats

Richard Gallagher, an Ivy League-trained New York psychiatrist, was once every bit as skeptical about supernatural phenomena as most of his scientifically oriented colleagues.

Then, as he describes in his 2020 book, "Demonic Foes: My Twenty-Five Years as a Psychiatrist Investigating Possessions, Diabolic Attacks, and the Paranormal," a priest Gallagher knew brought a woman he refers to as Julia to his home office.

The night before her visit, he told The Sun, he and his wife were awakened at 3 a.m. by the sound of their two normally friendly cats shrieking and clawing each other.

When Julia came to his home the next morning, Gallagher said, she introduced herself with a smirk and asked him how his cats were doing.

What he saw as he observed her over the next few weeks convinced him her condition could not be explained by medical science. On one occasion, he recalled, during a drive with Julia and the priest, she appeared to fall asleep, then said, in a suddenly deeper-than-usual voice, "You never learn, you f------ priest! She's ours, leave her alone, or you're going to be sorry." When she awoke, she had no idea where she was.

Another time, he said Julia told him she could "see" a friend of his even though the man was several states away. When Gallagher called him to check, the man confirmed her description of his attire (a blue windbreaker) and what he was doing (walking on a beach).

Gallagher later attended several exorcisms of Julia – a self-described Satanist. The sessions fell short of liberating her, but they were the first of hundreds he has witnessed while emerging as one of the world's most widely consulted scientific experts on demonic possession – and he said he has been seeing more cases than he can fit into his busy physician's schedule.

"Anybody who thinks there are no Satanists is just as wrong as anybody who thinks that Satanists are around every corner," he said.

A victim levitating

Another longtime exorcist spoke to The Sun on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal from a bishop who prefers secrecy.

He said he has never heard of a head spinning but he said it's common for afflicted people to physically resist entering a church, have the strength to throw a grown man across a room, manifest totally white eyes, speak in Russian or Latin, or – a sign he says means a demon is being expelled – foaming at the mouth so badly that "you have to get a bucket."

He also witnessed in Rome a victim levitating about two feet above her chair. He and four other team members had to hold her down.

"This went on for a few minutes," he said.

Now retired, the priest still gets multiple requests per week, and "it's hard to blow off people who are suffering." He helped establish the Pope Leo XIII Institute, an educational center on exorcism, in the Chicago area in 2012, and like almost everyone in the field, he's a member of the International Association of Exorcists, an organization the church founded in 1994 and boasts more than 900 members.

The priests interviewed for this story have theories as to why exorcism is in demand. Some point to the growing number of Americans drawn to the kind of alternative practices – tarot cards, astrology, the use of Ouija boards – they believe are like catnip to demons.

Rossetti said there are three steps toward "getting possessed" – abandoning one's faith life, committing serious sins, and practicing the occult – and "a frightening number of people, including young people, going down this path.

"There's no doubt in my mind that years from now, many of them will have demonic afflictions," he added.

Still, he and his colleagues have faith that God has power over Satan, and as long as they bring the faith, strength and humility the task calls for, he's sure it will set the captives free.

"It's a great confirmation of the faith and one of the graces of this ministry," he said.

E. Jason Wambsgans / Chicago Tribune / TNS

The sun sets on Brooklyn, Illinois, as two people bike through town on Nov. 24, 2024.

Setbacks and hope as America's oldest Black town fights for its survival

By JONATHAN BULLINGTON
Chicago Tribune (TNS)

BROOKLYN, Ill. — The brick building at Madison and South 5th streets is still vacant, still boarded up, still tagged with faded gang graffiti.

For the second time in as many years, it's been slated for a $2.5 million makeover, courtesy of the federal government, that would transform the building – once a grocery store and, later, a skating rink – into a community center for this historic town of 650 people across the Mississippi River from St. Louis.

And once again, the project has stalled, its future uncertain, amid partisan spending battles in Washington, D.C., and the looming threat of a government shutdown.

"This is a good example of an important community project being held hostage," said U.S. Rep. Nikki Budzinski, a Springfield Democrat whose district covers Brooklyn and who included the community center as part of her federal appropriations requests in fiscal years 2025 and 2026.

"These communities, and Brooklyn is a great example, are not flush with cash," she added. "They're in need of these federal investments (and) the level of uncertainty is creating anxiety."

There have been plenty of reasons for anxiety, and some signs of hope, in Brooklyn this year as community members and supporters fight to stave off the city's demise and preserve its legacy as America's oldest Black town.

In January, the Chicago Tribune profiled Brooklyn: Its founding in the early 1830s as a refuge for free and enslaved Black people. Its days as a thriving entertainment hub. Its eventual decline in the second half of the 20th century and the disparate group of archaeologists, urban planners, preservationists, current residents and former Brooklynites at the center of an ambitious revitalization plan.

Shortly after the story published, staff from U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin's office contacted Brooklyn officials to offer federal help. People familiar with those discussions said they included the possible construction of a dual visitor center and museum, but excitement for the plan had been quashed a few months later when it became clear that President Donald Trump's administration had little appetite for anything that spoke to the country's history of racism.

A spokesperson for Durbin blamed the Trump administration and congressional Republicans for stymying federal investment in Brooklyn and other Illinois communities, saying their "historic cuts to Medicaid, education and other critical services have also impacted funding for local projects across the country, all to line the pockets of billionaires."

Brooklyn, Illinois mayor Trenton Atkins on Nov. 12, 2024.

'We'll be ready'

Mayor Trenton Atkins said he is not waiting around for the federal government, nor is he concerned with attempts to whitewash his hometown's story.

"You can't erase history," he said. "It was here before we were, so how can you erase it? We're going to always have our history in Brooklyn. I think they're trying to keep our children from learning our history. But it's up to us to step in and show them."

Five months ago, the 65-year-old Brooklyn native and former village trustee unseated three-term incumbent Vera Glasper-Banks to become mayor. He's called the availability of federal dollars a "freeze," one he expects will eventually thaw.

"We're trying to put ourselves in a position where when things get better," he said, "we'll be ready."

And so, on a Monday in August, the new mayor boarded a golf cart and toured Brooklyn with a group that included state Sen. Christopher Belt of Swansea and representatives from Norfolk Southern railroad.

Generations of Brooklynites have been wary of continued expansion by the railroad companies whose tracks encircle the village and who, in past decades, have become its largest landowners in combined acreage and parcels.

Atkins, though, has tried to strike a different tone.

"The railroad has been here for years," he said. "And what people don't understand – the railroad is part of our history."

Days after Norfolk Southern's visit, he hosted a similar tour with officials from the Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis. In both cases, he said the companies agreed to clear overgrown and littered lots they own in town. At least a dozen parcels were identified to start, he said, with the ultimate goal of redeveloping the properties.

Spokespeople from both companies confirmed the cleanup efforts have started on select parcels and that the companies are working with the village on economic development opportunities for the land.

"I just feel like Brooklyn has been behind the times for so long," Atkins said. "Right now, I'm feeling good about it, because we're getting key stakeholders at the table to talk about how we can change things. … I'm kind of excited to see down the line, like next year, where will we be?"

The mayor said he thinks one of the newly cleared parcels could become the site of a new fire station and village hall; the former has been condemned, the latter in not-much-better shape.

There are plenty of other needs in Brooklyn: Housing. Infrastructure repairs. Jobs and businesses so the village is less economically reliant on the adult entertainment industry, which had been booming but has retracted in recent years.

Before that can happen, though, Atkins said he wants the village to have a clear direction for its future. Helping with that effort is the Chicago-based nonprofit Far South Community Development Corp., which works primarily with communities on the city's South Side.

Prompted by the Tribune's coverage of Brooklyn, the organization's president, Abraham Lacy, said he reached out to Brooklyn's past administration about volunteering its services.

"I'm amazed as an African American and a person who's pretty astute on history how I didn't even know about this," Lacy said. "I just felt a certain level of wanting, a need, to help. I came down there to say, however which way they want to use us, we want to do it."

Lacy said he and other volunteers – consultants and urban planners – are in the early stages of research for what could ultimately become a comprehensive village plan, one that incorporates and builds upon last year's revitalization planning sessions organized by the Western Illinois University-based Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs.

The Trump administration's posture toward Black history – and the ensuing effects on federal funding allocations – is not deterring that work, Lacy said.

"I don't think we should give much weight to this administration because they're a moment in time," he said. "Although they could delay things from happening, they can't deny us because, eventually, we're going to get what we need."

Illinois, he added, is "a state that invests in people and invests in communities."

'A homegrown archaeologist'

While federal grant dollars have, for now, seemingly vanished, Brooklyn has been the recent beneficiary of outside investments.

In July, the National Trust for Historic Preservation awarded a $50,000 grant to the Illinois State Archaeological Survey. The money will help the University of Illinois-based research team partner with the Historical Society of Brooklyn, Illinois to continue excavating sites in search of additional artifacts from the town's beginnings – evidence they hope will bolster Brooklyn's eventual inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

The grant will also fund an afterschool program, focused on archaeology and local history, in the village's school district as well as an archaeology internship for one local high school student.

"We're hoping this could lead to a homegrown archeologist," said Erin Benson, one of the state archaeologists in charge of the grant.

State archaeological survey staffers are also working on separate projects to garner more historic recognition for Brooklyn. One involves making sure Brooklyn is no longer excluded from maps and literature documenting the path of Route 66 – the venerable road once passed through town and is celebrating its centennial next year.

The other involves applying to have Brooklyn's Civic Center building added to the national register. Built in 1952, the building once hosted talent shows, dances, weddings, funerals and baby showers. Today, it's been largely replaced as a community gathering spot by the nearby senior center, though it's still used for some smaller events.

"People called it the heartbeat of the community," said Laura Shih, an ISAS architectural historian who is working on the national register application. "There's been so much done in Brooklyn as far as its founding." But, she added, "there's the other story of 20th century Brooklyn that doesn't get talked about in a positive light … that the civic center tells about this really vibrant community that existed in the mid-20th century and could exist again."

On a sunny Saturday afternoon in September, state archaeologists joined the historical society for a community event in Brooklyn. They excavated a small plot to demonstrate the process and displayed artifacts unearthed in previous digs.

Nearby, on North 4th Street, the historical society celebrated the beginnings of its long-envisioned Mother Priscilla Baltimore Memorial Walkway, named after the woman who, according to oral history, led 11 Black families – some former slaves, some fleeing slavery – across the Mississippi in 1829 to what is now Brooklyn.

Historical society co-founder Roberta Rogers said students and staff from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's engineering school are assisting with the design for the walkway. The goal, she said, is to one day include brick memorial pavers. There will be murals depicting the treacherous river crossings that led to Brooklyn's creation and the town's "l egends," people such as blues great Albert King, hair care pioneer Annie Turnbo Malone, Negro Leagues standout Joe "Prince" Henry and jazz musician Hamiet Bluiett. Plaques will honor Baltimore, the town's founding families and the reverends whose churches served as stops in the Underground Railroad.

At the center is a newly reinstalled granite monument to Brooklyn's founding, inscribed with a passage that ends: "Brooklyn's survival despite formidable odds is testament to its proud past, the resiliency of its people, and great hope for the future."

Mindfulness

It won't burn calories, but it might help you stick with your health goals

By MASHA REMSKAR
Arizona State University

Most people know roughly what kind of lifestyle they should be living to stay healthy.

Think regular exercise, a balanced diet and sufficient sleep. Yet, despite all the hacks, trackers and motivational quotes, many of us still struggle to stick with our health goals.

Meanwhile, people worldwide are experiencing more lifestyle-associated chronic disease than ever before.

But what if the missing piece in your health journey wasn't more discipline – but more stillness?

Research shows that mindfulness meditation can help facilitate this pursuit of health goals through stillness, and that getting started is easier than you might think – no Buddhist monk robes or silent retreats required.

Given how ubiquitous and accessible mindfulness resources are these days, I have been surprised to see mindfulness discussed and studied only as a mental health tool, stopping short of exploring its usefulness for a whole range of lifestyle choices.

I am a psychologist and behavioral scientist researching ways to help people live healthier lives, especially by moving more and regulating stress more efficiently.

My team's work and that of other researchers suggests that mindfulness could play a pivotal role in paving the way for a healthier society, one mindful breath at a time.

Mindfulness unpacked

Mindfulness has become a buzzword of late, with initiatives now present in schools, boardrooms and even among first responders. But what is it, really?

Mindfulness refers to the practice or instance of paying careful attention to one's present-moment experience – such as their thoughts, breath, bodily sensations and the environment – and doing so nonjudgmentally. Its origins are in Buddhist traditions, where it plays a crucial role in connecting communities and promoting selflessness.

Over the past 50 years, however, mindfulness-based practice has been Westernized into structured therapeutic programs and stress-management tools, which have been widely studied for their benefits to mental and physical health.

Research has shown that mindfulness offers wide-ranging benefits to the mind, the body and productivity.

Mindfulness-based programs, both in person and digitally delivered, can effectively treat depression and anxiety, protect from burnout, improve sleep and reduce pain.

Getty Images

The impacts extend beyond subjective experience too. Studies find that experienced meditators – that is, people who have been meditating for at least one year – have lower markers of inflammation, which means that their bodies are better able to fight off infections and regulate stress. They also showed improved cognitive abilities and even altered brain structure.

But I find the potential for mindfulness to support a healthy lifestyle most exciting of all.

How can mindfulness help you build healthy habits?

My team's research suggests that mindfulness equips people with the psychological skills required to successfully change behavior. Knowing what to do to achieve healthy habits is rarely what stands in people's way. But knowing how to stay motivated and keep showing up in the face of everyday obstacles such as lack of time, illness or competing priorities is the most common reason people fall off the wagon – and therefore need the most support. This is where mindfulness comes in.

Multiple studies have found that people who meditate regularly for at least two months become more inherently motivated to look after their health, which is a hallmark of those who adhere to a balanced diet and exercise regularly.

A 2024 study with over 1,200 participants that I led found more positive attitudes toward healthy habits and stronger intentions to put them into practice in meditators who practiced mindfulness for 10 minutes daily alongside a mobile app, compared with nonmeditators. This may happen because mindfulness encourages self-reflection and helps people feel more in tune with their bodies, making it easier to remember why being healthier is important to us.

Another key way mindfulness helps keep momentum with healthy habits is by restructuring one's response to pain, discomfortand failure. This is not to say that meditators feel no pain, nor that pain during exercise is encouraged – it is not!

Mild discomfort, however, is a very common experience of novice exercisers. For example, you may feel out of breath or muscle fatigue when initially taking up a new activity, which is when people are most likely to give up. Mindfulness teaches you to notice these sensations but see them as transient and with minimal judgment, making them less disruptive to habit-building.

Putting mindfulness into practice

A classic mindfulness exercise includes observing the breath and counting inhales up to 10 at a time. This is surprisingly difficult to do without getting distracted, and a core part of the exercise is noticing the distraction and returning to the counting. In other words, mindfulness involves the practice of failure in small, inconsequential ways, making real-world perceived failure – such as a missed exercise session or a one-off indulgent meal – feel more manageable. This strengthens your ability to stay consistent in pursuit of health goals.

Finally, paying mindful attention to our bodies and the environment makes us more observant, resulting in a more varied and enjoyable exercising or eating experience. Participants in another study we conducted reported noticing the seasons changing, a greater connection to their surroundings and being better able to detect their own progress when exercising mindfully. This made them more likely to keep going in their habits.

Luckily, there are plenty of tools available to get started with mindfulness practice these days, many of them free. Mobile applications, such as Headspace or Calm, are popular and effective starting points, providing audio-guided sessions to follow along. Some are as short as five minutes. Research suggests that doing a mindfulness session first thing in the morning is the easiest to maintain, and after a month or so you may start to see the skills from your meditative practice reverberating beyond the sessions themselves.

Based on our research on mindfulness and exercise, I collaborated with the nonprofit Medito Foundation to create the first mindfulness program dedicated to moving more. When we tested the program in a research study, participants who meditated alongside these sessions for one month reported doing much more exercise than before the study and having stronger intentions to keep moving compared with participants who did not meditate. Increasingly, the mobile applications mentioned above are offering mindful movement meditations too.

If the idea of a seated practice does not sound appealing, you can instead choose an activity to dedicate your full attention to. This can be your next walk outdoors, where you notice as much about your experience and surroundings as possible. Feeling your feet on the ground and the sensations on your skin are a great place to start.

For people with even less time available, short bursts of mindfulness can be incorporated into even the busiest of routines. Try taking a few mindful, nondistracted breaths while your coffee is brewing, during a restroom break or while riding the elevator. It may just be the grounding moment you need to feel and perform better for the rest of the day.

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What you eat and drink can contribute to your hair loss

By CINDY KRISCHER GOODMAN
South Florida Sun Sentinel (TNS)

It may not be age that is making your hair thin or fall out, but rather what you are eating and drinking.

New research shows certain foods contribute to hair loss, and others help with hair growth.

Sugar-sweetened beverages and alcoholic drinks are associated with a higher risk of hair loss, according to research published in Nutrition and Health, which analyzed 17 studies on diet and hair.

"When we consume high amounts of sugar, we get an insulin spike that promotes inflammation and can distort the natural hair growth cycles," explains Laura Acosta, a registered dietitian and associate professor of Food Science and Human Nutrition at the University of Florida. "With alcohol, it's not that it necessarily directly causes hair shedding itself, but it does contribute to nutrient deficiency, nutrient malabsorption, liver stress, poor sleep, and systemic inflammation – all of which can wreak havoc on hair growth."

Not consuming enough protein also can lead to hair loss. Acosta says a person needs to take in half a gram of protein per pound of body weight each day.

"We tend to be more protein-deficient than we think," said Dr. Jila Senemar, a Miami menopause specialist who says hair shedding, hormones, and diet are all interrelated.

Foods that can help with healthy hair and hair growth include soy-based nourishment like edamame or tofu, and cruciferous veggies like cauliflower or broccoli, which can reduce the risk of hair loss. Nutritionists believe this is likely due to the antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties of their phytochemicals, such as isoflavones and carotenoids. Additionally, persimmon leaf has been studied and found to be linked to improvements in both hair density and thickness. Persimmon leaf contains antioxidants like quercetin that improve blood flow to the scalp. You can drink it in tea or take an oral supplement.

While most studies in this new review primarily included women, one study involving 76 men with male pattern baldness found greater hair growth in a group that consumed 400mg of pumpkin seed oil for 24 weeks compared to a placebo group. Researchers believe the reason for the hair growth may be hormonal – pumpkin seed oil may decrease dihydrotestosterone (DHT), a hormone known to affect hair follicles and cause hair thinning.

When it comes to supplements, Vitamin D has been the most studied. At least five studies analyzed in this review found that higher vitamin D levels may be protective against hair loss. Acosta said 2,000 international units (IUs) would be a good dose to aim for, noting there is risk for toxicity if someone takes too much.

Another supplement to consider is iron. One study showed that iron supplementation (in the form of 100-milligram tablets) improved hair growth in women. Senemar, the Miami doctor, said if someone is iron-deficient and wants to take supplements, she suggests taking them with vitamin C, which can help increase iron absorption. She points out that certain foods are good sources of iron, including spinach, lentils and almonds.

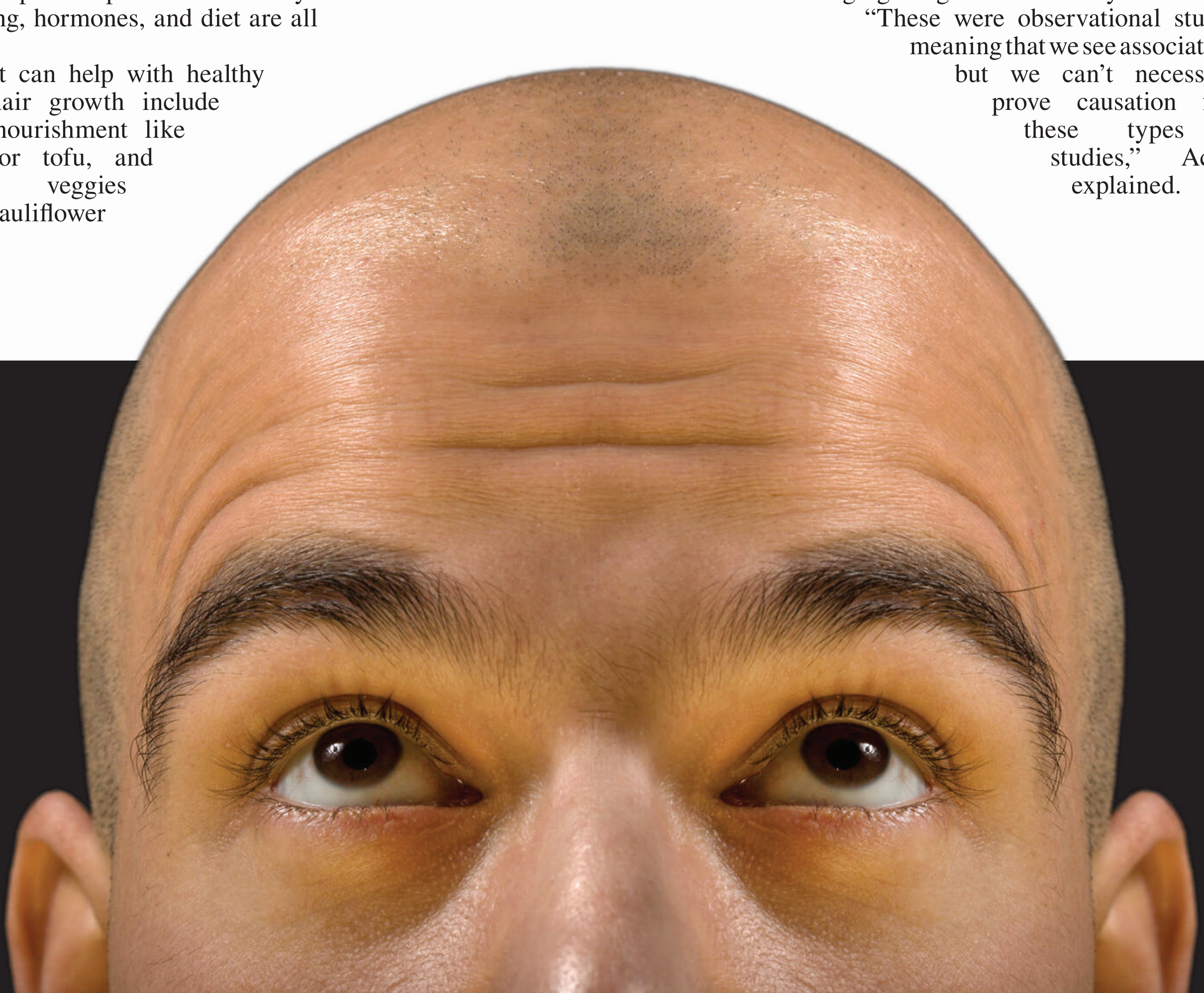
Acosta recommends having your iron levels tested along with your zinc and biotin (Vitamin B7) levels because deficiencies can cause hair loss or thinning. Adults need 30 micrograms of biotin daily. It can be found in foods like meats, eggs, fish, seeds, nuts and vegetables like sweet potatoes.

"If you're not biotin deficient, though, taking biotin supplements is unlikely to help your hair," Acosta said.

Recently, research has been focused on collagen for hair growth. "There is some exciting research going on around collagen supplements that a few years ago I probably would have dismissed, but now it really has my attention," she said.

For the newly published review, researchers scoured three big scientific databases – PubMed, Web of Science, and Scopus – using keywords like "dietary intake," "nutritional status," and "hair growth." In total, the studies involved 613,320 individuals, mostly females, ranging in age from 7 to 77 years old.

"These were observational studies, meaning that we see associations, but we can't necessarily prove causation from these types of studies," Acosta explained.



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ASK THE PEDIATRICIAN

School cell phone policies: Tips for families

By JENNY RADESKY, MD, FAAP and MEGAN A MORENO, MD, FAAP
American Academy of Pediatrics (TNS)

Jim Watson / AFP / Getty Images / TNS

Mark Twain Middle School Principal Matthew Mough speaks during an interview March 6 about the Alexandria, Virginia, school's smartphone ban while holding the locking YONDR pouch for cell phones. Mough admitted that enforcing the ban, and winning over students, has proved challenging. "The majority of kids who have phones don't love it," he said. "However, if you dig deeper with them in the conversation, they will acknowledge that it's helped them remain focused."

Does your child's school have a new phone policy starting this year? Some schools now ask students to keep phones away "bell-to-bell," from the start of classes through dismissal. Others use locking bags like the Yondr pouch to store phones during the day. Some only allow phones at lunch.

New school phone policies like these and more can mean some adjustments for both students and parents. Parents, especially, have said they feel worried about not being able to easily access their child at school if there's an emergency. These changes will take some getting used to for everyone. Here are some first steps to help your children prepare for these changes.

Without thinking about it, many of us have our phones in our hands or pockets most of the day. Try setting times at home when everyone puts their phones out of reach and does other activities. These breaks from screens help kids of all ages adjust to being without their devices and focus more on what's happening around them.

Easy times to start going phone-free are during car rides, meals or time outside. At bedtime, swap the phone for a book, journaling or another bedtime routine. As a parent, you can model this behavior by putting away your devices, too!

One way to help your teen or tween step away from their phones more is by showing them the benefits of phone-free time. Talk about time away from phones as an experiment that everyone will learn from. How does it feel to not have their phone within reach? Do they like the uninterrupted time being alone with their thoughts, or is it uncomfortable at first? How much have they gotten in the habit of following a feed rather than their own creativity? Pay attention to see if at-home conversations or homework become easier.

You can also utilize built-in phone settings that most phones and devices have to help manage screen time. Through digital well-being, screen time or family pairing settings, you can set downtime or do-not-disturb options. Instead of seeing it as a restriction on your family's screen time, treat it as protecting activities that matter to you, where you want to be fully present. Remind your kids that tech companies don't need (or deserve) to have access to us every waking minute of the day!

Check your phone settings together as a family and view your screen time amount or number of pickups. Are you surprised at how many times you also pick up your phone?

Middle and high school students often say they use their phones to relax or "reset" when school feels overwhelming. As a caregiver, validate the fact that it's normal to feel that way at school sometimes. But also emphasize the importance of problem-solving with other coping strategies like taking deep breaths, using grounding exercises, asking to take a brief walk to get a drink of water and speaking with a school counselor. Parents and educators can work together to support students who are feeling stressed or overwhelmed by brainstorming plans for when students need to reset.

A major source of phone notifications during kids' school days is – guess what? Parents! Although it's convenient, and you may want to provide emotional support to a stressed child, kids learn how to be independent more easily when they have some space away from their parents each day. Batch your notifications until after school is over or write ideas down on a sticky note to talk about with your child later.

Did you know you can schedule texts to be delivered at specific times in the future? Type a text when convenient for you and select "Send Later" to deliver when convenient for them!

For unexpected issues like needing a pickup, illness or forgetting homework, use the school office phone line during the school day. Set an expectation that using the phone is fine before and after school. If you're worried about communicating during emergencies, talk to the school and review the emergency communication plan. All schools should have a plan in place.

If your child or teen is getting a new phone, you can do them a favor by making it boring to begin with. This means starting out without social media, YouTube or games. These are the biggest distractions during school hours. You can set up the phone to require your permission for new downloads. This way, the phone is mostly a communication device, not a source of fun, and they won't be as tempted to check it during the school day.

Some parents have expressed concern about phone rebounding, or increased use for extended time periods, after their kids get their phones back at the end of the day. Talk with your children about how it feels to be away from their phone during school hours and how they can still use their phone mindfully while also ensuring tasks that need completed like homework are prioritized.

Change is hard, so treat mistakes as a growth opportunity. Take the time to review and discuss your school's phone policy with your child. Go over what the consequences will be if kids violate their school policy, and how you will work together to help your child succeed.

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FINANCE

Jim Watson / AFP / Getty Images / TNS

The seal of the U.S. Federal Reserve Board of Governors is seen ahead of Chair Jerome Powell's news conference at the Federal Reserve headquarters, following the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 17.

How the Fed impacts stocks, crypto and other investments

By JAMES ROYAL, PH.D.
Bankrate.com (TNS)

Higher interest rates played out on stocks, cryptocurrency and commodities such as oil over the past few years. But now that the Federal Reserve has been lowering short-term rates, what can investors expect from here, and how long will the shifting rate environment impact markets?

After lowering interest rates by 25 basis points at its December meeting, the Federal Reserve opted to hold rates steady at five straight meetings before lowering them at its latest meeting on Sept. 16-17, dropping them by 25 basis points to a range of 4.0 to 4.25 percent. With the potential disruptions and inflation caused by President Donald Trump's tariffs, as well as rising unemployment, the nation's central bank decided to edge rates down.

More rate cuts may be on the way in 2025 and early 2026, helping buoy the U.S. economy.

How interest rates impact investments

Interest rates are one of the biggest tools the Fed has for influencing the economy. By lowering rates, the Fed can stimulate economic activity, making it cheaper to borrow. On the other hand, by raising interest rates, the Fed can slow economic activity, making credit more expensive – which is a useful strategy to fight inflation.

While the Fed raised rates 11 times during the last tightening cycle, it's easy to spot when markets really sat up and took notice that the central bank wasn't kidding that it was about to recalibrate monetary policy. It was November 2021 when cryptocurrency and many of the riskiest stocks peaked.

"When the Fed introduced restrictive monetary policies by increasing rates in 2022, this caused equity markets and cryptocurrencies to appropriately decline in valuation," says Octavio Sandoval, principal at Illumen Capital.

"The stock market will never not worry about future interest rates," says Steve Azoury, head of Azoury Financial in Troy, Michigan. "The cost of borrowing impacts all areas of investing, purchasing and savings. Just the anticipation of what may happen is enough to cause a stock market reaction."

While rates were moving higher, many stocks were moving lower, anticipating slower economic conditions. But when investors got a clearer picture of the end of rising rates in 2023, the stock outlook became more optimistic.

Major stock indexes such as the S&P 500 spent most of 2022 in a funk due to rising rates, but they fared well in 2023. The S&P 500 rose about 24 percent in 2023, while the Nasdaq Composite climbed around 43 percent. They followed that up strongly in 2024, and have risen to new all-time highs in 2025 after rebounding from a meltdown over Trump's tariffs in April.

Amid rising interest rates, many high-growth stocks had a rough 2022, and while prices firmed up in the past couple of years, that doesn't mean these stocks are still anywhere close to their prior highs.

For example, software stocks such as Zoom Communications and Confluent are well below the all-time highs they hit in 2020 or 2021. Nonetheless, profitable big-name stocks such as Microsoft, Apple and others in the Magnificent 7 set a series of new all-time highs year after year despite higher rates, even after a lackluster 2022.

In 2022, cryptocurrency prices struggled as interest rates looked to move higher. But when rates began to top, crypto prices bottomed and then rose in 2023 and throughout 2024. The introduction of Bitcoin ETFs has helped boost the price of Bitcoin, and the prospect of lower rates and inflows to ETFs have pushed Ethereum higher, too.

How do lower interest rates affect stocks?

A lower fed funds rate makes it easier for money to flow through the economy, helping to boost markets or at least support them from declining more. As lower short-term rates help boost the economy, stocks begin rising due to the prospects for higher corporate profits. Lower short-term interest rates make stocks and other risky investments look like more attractive investments compared to alternatives such as bonds.

In contrast, when short-term rates are high or expected to move higher, stocks endure notable volatility as investors factor in rising rates. In other words, stocks begin pricing in a slowing economy and lower profit growth due to higher rates.

While the Fed lowered short-term interest rates in late 2024, longer-term interest rates ticked up notably. But by September 2025, the bellwether 10-year Treasury, now offering a 4.08 percent yield, had been trending lower for months. The 10-year yield is now approaching some of its lowest levels of the last 12 months.

With the federal government expecting to run even larger budget deficits under Trump's proposed tax plans, investors had been demanding higher long-term rates to protect them against the potential for inflation. But slower economic conditions lately have lowered those expectations for a stronger economy, resulting in a lower long-term yield.

How interest rates have affected crypto and commodities markets

Some other major asset classes have had varied responses in the face of fluctuating rates.

While cryptocurrency prices plummeted along with other risky assets, many commodities spiked higher in early 2022, including oil, but many of those moves proved short-lived. With the rising fed funds rate slowing and then pausing in 2023, both oil and crypto found some support, while gold powered higher.

Gold has long been a safe haven in times of volatility. The yellow metal went on a tear in 2024, as the pending arrival of lower rates and potential market volatility helped boost its price. It's had a strong 2025 as well, rising to record levels as economic uncertainty rears its head, along with spiraling U.S. federal debt.

Cryptocurrency has often been touted as a cure-all for what ails you, whether that's inflation, low interest rates, lack of purchasing power, devaluation of the dollar and so on. Those positives were easy to believe in as long as crypto was rising, seemingly regardless of other assets.

"The truth is that crypto prices have proven to be impacted by the same directional sentiment that impacts retail stock investors," says Dan Raju, CEO of Tradier, a brokerage platform. "In general, high interest rates scare investors away from riskier investments like crypto, and the lowering of rates will be seen as a positive by the crypto investor community."

Indeed, cryptocurrencies responded to reduced liquidity, as did other risky assets, by falling when the Fed announced in November 2021 its intention to raise rates and then throughout 2022 as the Fed aggressively followed through. On top of that, the blowups of cryptocurrencies and exchanges such as FTX hammered traders' confidence in these virtual assets.

But instability in the banking sector in 2023 led many traders to bid up cryptocurrency, in the belief that the future path of rate increases would be less severe. And as 10-year Treasury rates peaked in October 2023 and then fell, riskier assets rose, as the path to a lower fed funds rate appeared clear and then actually did appear in September 2024.

However, other factors are also at play in the rise of cryptocurrency. One of the most notable is the approval of spot Bitcoin ETFs, which has driven a lot of money to this cryptocurrency. The election of Trump, perceived as the crypto-friendly presidential candidate, also had traders betting strongly on an expected rise in cryptocurrency.

As for commodities, many have been well off their recent highs, as fewer supply constraints and higher interest rates work to take them down a few notches. But the expectation of lower rates helped keep oil from falling substantially below $70 a barrel in 2023 and 2024. Oil bounced around between $70 and $85 for much of 2024, though in early 2025 it fell under $60 on fears about a slowing economy.

How should interest rates impact your investing strategy?

Interest rates, inflation and uncertainty – all create a stew of volatility for investors. With so much volatility, investors may want to tread cautiously.

However, the best way for most investors to approach this type of market is to stick to the long-term game plan. For many, the long-term plan means continuing to invest regularly in a diversified portfolio of stocks or bonds and mostly disregarding the noise around the world. For others, the game plan may involve buying and holding well-diversified index funds. Either way, don't let emotions get in the way of an effective long-term investing plan.

While short-term traders may be sweating rate movements, it's vital to keep things in perspective. Instead of trying to find the right time to sell, buy-and-hold investors can use the market's volatility to their advantage and then try to find the right time to add more.

"For long-term investors, the pullbacks represent attractive buying opportunities," says Greg McBride, CFA, Bankrate chief financial analyst.

Downturns can be an appealing time to add to your portfolio at discounted prices. As investing legend Warren Buffett once said, "You pay a very high price in the stock market for a cheery consensus." That is, stocks are cheaper when few agree that they're an attractive investment.

Bottom line

Interest rates rose quickly in 2022 and 2023, and since September 2024, the Fed has begun lowering rates, after a significant pause for most of 2025. Those investors with a long-term investing horizon may view any downturn as an ideal time to pick up some quality investments at bargain prices.

And if stock valuations plummet? Buffett has some wisdom for that situation, too: "Opportunities come infrequently. When it rains gold, put out the bucket, not the thimble."

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Navigating Now: How Gen Xers can survive the surge in costs of aging parent care and child care

By LANE GILLESPIE
Bankrate.com (TNS)

Dreamstime / TNS

Most Gen Xers' parents either already need end-of-life care or are at the age where they'll need to make plans for future care.

Katey Davern, a 46-year-old in St. Paul, Minnesota, has learned firsthand just how much paperwork is involved when planning someone's last years.

Davern, along with her three siblings, started planning for their elderly parents' end-of-life needs about three years ago. As the parent of five children herself – three of whom are under 18 and still live at home – Davern is increasingly navigating two different financial worlds. In one, she's helping her parents with end-of-life financial planning. In the other, she and her husband are managing their own immediate family's spending, saving for their children's college, contributing to their retirement accounts and adding to their health savings accounts (HSA).

"I think the weird part about being Gen X is while you are raising your kids and they're becoming less dependent on you, you start to kind of raise your parents. But they don't want to be dependent on you. It's a really tricky situation," Davern says.

Most Gen Xers' parents either already need end-of-life care or are at the age where they'll need to make plans for future care. As a result, many Gen Xers themselves (ages 45-60) are in the rare position of having two financial priorities: serving as caretakers for their parents, who could need extensive and time-consuming care, while also sometimes raising kids under the age of 18, who could need child care, school expenses and a college fund. These costs have only grown more expensive over the last few years because of inflation.

The combination of multiple, high-cost financial priorities can have negative effects on Gen Xers' finances, including their ability to budget and save. And whether they're caregivers or not, Bankrate data shows that many Gen Xers already struggle to meet important financial milestones, like building a sufficient emergency fund or saving enough to retire. Overall, 84 percent of Gen Xers say they are not completely financially secure, a higher percentage than any other generation, according to Bankrate's Financial Freedom Survey.

"Generation Xers are the classic group that many of us call the 'sandwich generation,'" says Bankrate U.S. Economic Reporter Sarah Foster, who reports on economic policy and its effect on American households. "They're wedged in the middle between conflicting financial goals, like caring for their parents and raising their children. They may feel economic turning points more severely."

In today's economic landscape – marked by market volatility, inflation concerns, and tenuous job security – financial decisions have never felt more consequential. Our "Navigating Now" series cuts through the noise with targeted advice for diverse financial situations. Each profile examines real-world challenges and opportunities faced by different Americans, offering actionable strategies tailored to their unique circumstances. Whether you're struggling to build savings amid rising costs, protect retirement funds during market volatility, or secure your income in an uncertain job landscape, these roadmaps provide clarity in uncertain times.

Rising prices, limited resources are squeezing caregivers – especially Gen Xers

Twenty-nine percent of family caregivers of any age have children or grandchildren under the age of 18 living at home while also caring for an adult family member or friend, according to AARP.

Caring for aging parents is expensive, and those costs often fall on caregivers. Caregivers spend 26 percent of their personal income on caregiving expenses on average, according to AARP, and the average family caregiver spends roughly $7,200 per year on out-of-pocket caregiving expenses. Caregivers might also take on other indirect expenses, like additional transportation costs to take their parents to the doctor.

Even if Gen X caregivers were to help their parents as frugally as possible – such as going without hired help and keeping their parents at home – several economic factors make elder care more expensive today.

For one, costs of caring for the elderly at home are actually rising faster than costs of nursing homes or other inpatient care. The inflation rate for the care of ill and elderly people at home has risen 5.6 percent year-over-year, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), while nursing homes and adult day services have risen 4.7 percent. The cost of caring for the elderly at home has grown more than twice the overall inflation rate for all consumer goods (2.7 percent).

Additionally, new restrictions to Medicare passed in the Trump administration's One Big Beautiful Bill Act will reduce – or eliminate – access to health care for many elderly Americans. The bill blocks improvements to Medicare Savings Programs, blocks nursing home staffing standards and limits Medicare's ability to negotiate drug prices for some rare medical conditions, among other changes. Without widely available access to care, many low-income elderly Americans may need to rely on their Gen X children even more, including paying for their increasingly expensive medications or helping them find health care providers.

In addition to the cost of caring for their parents, Gen X caregivers have to consider the rising costs of raising their own kids. The average cost of day care and preschool rose 5.7 percent between July 2024 and July 2025, according to the BLS. Infant care for one child alone already costs at least 10 percent of a family's yearly income in most states, according to Bankrate's Child Care Costs by State Study.

Once their kids are in school, parents still aren't financially relieved – the average cost of elementary and high school tuition and fees rose 3.1 percent year-over-year as of July, according to the BLS. That's before the cost of school supplies, extracurricular activities, saving for college and other necessary children's expenses.

As Gen X caregivers tackle the dual costs of caring for parents and their own children, many Gen Xers' finances are lagging behind. More than two-thirds (68 percent) of Gen X workers feel behind on where they should be on their retirement savings, according to Bankrate's 2024 Retirement Savings Survey, even though the oldest Gen Xers are only a few years away from retirement – or are already retired. Additionally, 69 percent of Gen Xers feel uncomfortable with their level of emergency savings, according to Bankrate's Emergency Savings Report.

With the majority of Gen Xers feeling behind on their retirement and emergency savings, some, especially low-income Gen Xers, may have trouble paying their bills when they hit retirement age themselves. The effects of these struggles go beyond the figures in their bank accounts: Gen Xers are also the likeliest generation to say money negatively impacts their mental health, according to Bankrate's Money and Mental Health Survey.

'Navigating Now': 4 tips for Gen Xers who have competing financial priorities

Managing one household's finances can be a challenge. Managing two households' finances can be an even bigger challenge. If your parents are aging, and you're raising kids of your own, the best way you can financially care for your entire family is to plan proactively.

1. Prioritize your own financial needs

Although you may have many financial priorities, it's still important to take care of your own financial needs first.

"Airline attendants like to say, 'Put your oxygen mask on before assisting others.' The same is often true for financial advice," Foster says. "You cannot be in a position to help others if you're not on solid financial footing yourself."

Foster recommends that people prioritize their own retirement account and emergency fund before contributing financially to others. Identify what you want to save for – such as an emergency savings fund, retirement account or large purchase, such as a down payment on a home – and make sure your budget includes monthly contributions to those buckets, as well as room to pay off high-interest debt. After, you can use the remaining funds to determine how much financial assistance you can provide to an elderly relative.

"Be open and honest with your children, siblings and parents about how much you can afford to help," Foster says. "With your children, that might be an opportunity to teach them about financial independence and planning – lessons that can pay dividends in their own lives."

2. Develop a financial organization system

If you're managing your parents' finances and your own kids', you'll have to keep track of a lot of information, such as budgets, bank accounts, goals and to-do lists. You should start keeping that information in one place, so you can track of all those moving parts and won't need to scramble to find important information in an emergency. You can use a pen and notebook to do that, but if you need a bit of digital assistance, you can also use a note-taking app, such as Notion, Evernote, Google Keep or Apple Notes.

Consider keeping track of:

- Important dates, like when bills are due or when a subscription is set to expire
- Your own budget and your parents', if you're managing their finances
- Your financial goals, like savings goals or investment goals
- Your debt payoff and savings goal progress
- Future purchases, like gifts or large expenses
- Scanned invoices, receipts and other miscellaneous documents
- To-do lists, especially if you take care of daily tasks for your parents and kids
- Emergency contacts

If you don't already, you should also make sure you're keeping your important financial documents – like vital records, deeds, titles and other hard copies of documents – together in an easily accessible place.

3. Set up necessary accounts for you and your children

If you don't have them already, consider opening savings accounts to allow your emergency savings, retirement savings and college education savings to grow. To set yourself and your family up for future success, you can prioritize contributing to any or all of the following accounts:

- An emergency savings fund with three to six months of expenses (or more, depending on your financial situation) saved for emergencies, like a sudden medical bill or job loss. A high-yield savings account is a great option for emergency savings funds because they typically offer higher interest rates than traditional savings accounts.
- Retirement accounts, such as a 401(k) (if your employer offers one) and/or Roth IRA. Make sure to contribute enough to a 401(k) to receive your employer match, if you have one.
- A health savings account (HSA), a tax-advantaged account that can pay for medical expenses now or in the future. Contributions are tax-deductible if you contribute by paycheck deduction, and earnings and withdrawals are tax-free if used for qualified healthcare expenses. Funds carry over from year to year.
- A 529 account, another tax-advantaged savings account that can pay for your children's education expenses, like tuition, fees, room and board.

"If uncertainty about college costs and the future of the job market have you nervous about locking up your funds for a specific purpose, even just contributing a few dollars every month into a low-cost index fund may go a long way in growing wealth for your child over time," Foster says.

4. Consider investing in long-term care insurance

Long-term care for the elderly is expensive, and not everyone has sufficient savings to pay for it themselves. If you're concerned about your parents' future access to assisted living or home care, you might want to consider taking out a long-term care (LTC) insurance policy for them. LTC insurance can pay for senior living homes, assisted living facilities, daily care programs or home care – any aid for people who need help with activities of daily living, such as dressing themselves.

LTC insurance can be a guaranteed way to pay for intensive elder care, which, depending on the level of care needed, can quickly cost at least six figures per year. However, LTC insurance is also costly, and not all insurance providers offer it. A 55-year-old American man can expect to pay a premium of $2,200 per year on average for $165,000 long-term care insurance with a 3 percent inflation option, according to the American Association for Long-Term Care Insurance. A 55-year-old woman would pay $3,750 per year on average for the same coverage. Hybrid policies may cost even more.

However, Davern is a big fan of LTC insurance. Both her parents pay for their own policies, and Davern and her three siblings all have policies for themselves for the future.

"Having long-term care insurance, I think, provides that sense of security of, no matter what happens to the quality of my life or my parents' life, we are financially able to deal with whatever comes our way," she says.

5. Start financial conversations about elder care early on – before they're urgent

Even if your parents are still healthy and aren't thinking about elder care yet, you should consider sitting down with them now and asking if you can help them prepare for the future. This will give you more time to take any necessary financial steps, like saving money or taking out insurance policies. Having a plan ahead of time will also help you and your parents avoid having to make important decisions in a crisis.

There are varying ways to help your parents in their last years. For some families, adult children might eventually have total control of their parents' finances, including estate, retirement and debt information, if they are no longer able to manage their finances themselves. For others, adult children might just want to know their parents' health care and end-of-life preferences, like their preferred hospital or their funeral plans.

If your parents are open to it, you should also consider asking them to keep important identity and financial information – such as vital records and the account name and password to their financial accounts – in a safe place that you can access later. If you need to access or close their accounts, you'll want that information easily available.

Together with her siblings, Davern has started sitting down with her parents to understand and organize her parents' financial situation. This includes her parents' medical information; the details of their estate, including whether they have outstanding mortgage balances and the name of their mortgage company; and their financial accounts, including their retirement accounts and their financial advisor's information.

That's just one example – every family is different. Your parents might not be ready or able to share information yet, and that's OK. If you're interested in helping them, tell them and be open to jumping in where you can.

The bottom line

Being caught between a relative's financial needs and your own children's often isn't easy. But by planning early – perhaps much earlier than you think you need to – you can give yourself the tools to navigate hard decisions later. Just don't forget to take care of yourself and your own financial needs along the way, too.

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Summer produce, like tomatoes and eggplant, can shift easily into cold-weather preparations.

Victoria Shibut / Dreamstime / TNS

4 recipes for fall cooking

By MEREDITH DEEDS
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

Cooking in early fall can be confusing. Farmers markets and grocery stores are caught between two seasons: The last of the summer harvest is still perfectly ripe, while fall's first crops are already inching their way into the produce section. Do you keep leaning on summer salads and grilled vegetables, or start roasting squash and baking casseroles?

Luckily, you don't have to choose; this is one of the most flexible times of the year in the kitchen. Summer produce, like tomatoes and eggplant, can shift easily into cold-weather preparations – roasting, baking, stewing – while apples and winter squash can be treated lightly so they don't feel too heavy on a warm fall day. The four recipes featured in today's column do just that.

Garlic and Cherry Tomato Baked Chicken: By late September, when local beefsteak tomatoes can be harder to find, I turn to cherry tomatoes. They still taste like sunshine, with a sweetness that makes them perfect for roasting.

In this recipe, they collapse into a jammy sauce that's brightened by white wine and thyme, while chicken thighs turn golden and juicy in the oven. Whole garlic cloves soften into buttery bites, giving the sauce richness without overpowering it. Serve it with crusty bread so you can mop up every tasty drop.

Hasselback Eggplant Parmesan: In my mind, Eggplant Parmesan is the perfect example of using late-summer produce in a hearty meal. Typically, you would bread and fry slices of eggplant before topping them with cheese and sauce. In this fun twist, it's kept a bit lighter by cutting the eggplant crosswise, almost all the way through, leaving the very bottom intact to hold the vegetable together while it cooks.

Cheese is stuffed between the slices, and the eggplant is baked in a marinara sauce until just tender before topping with a crispy mixture of browned panko and Parmesan cheese. The presentation is impressive, with the stuffed eggplant fanning out as it sits on top of the sauce. Spaghetti, tossed in more marinara sauce, is the perfect accompaniment.

Apple-Miso Grilled Pork Chops: We know fall is here when the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum's Apple House is open. I stopped by to pick up some fresh cider and applesauce, which I put to good use in this recipe.

If you haven't tried white miso paste, which can be found in most grocery stores, you're missing out on a useful ingredient that adds a savory umami flavor to a dish without overpowering the other ingredients.

In this recipe it's more of a background note, as the apples and pork are the main focus. Apple flavor is infused into the grilled pork via a light barbecue sauce that features apple cider, apple sauce and apple cider vinegar. Each brings a different note of the fall fruit to the dish. For juicy, grilled chops, choose ones that are thick and on the bone; thin, boneless chops can easily dry out on the grill.

Roasted Butternut Squash, Poblano and Bean Enchiladas: The minute I see the first winter squashes show up in the market, my mind starts racing with ideas of how to make the most out of them. I think I've done just that with this recipe.

Diced squash is roasted while poblano chiles are sautéed with onions before being mixed together with beans and canned enchilada sauce for an easy, light enchilada filling. The enchiladas are briefly baked before being lavishly garnished with diced avocado, cilantro, chopped onion, crumbled Cotija cheese and crunchy roasted pepitas. You don't have to use all the toppings, but together they do take these enchiladas to the next level.

Pretty soon, we'll all be leaning fully into stews, roasts, and pumpkin spice everything. For now, though, the overlap is worth savoring.

Hasselback Eggplant Parmesan

Serves 4

No one needs to know how easy it is to make this ultra-impressive twist on an iconic Italian American dish.

2 medium eggplants
Salt
1 1/2 c. marinara sauce
12 oz. low-moisture mozzarella, shredded
1 tsp. garlic powder
1/2 tsp. Italian seasoning
1/4 tsp. red pepper flakes
1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
1/4 c. whole basil leaves, plus 2 tbsp. torn basil leaves
4 tbsp. olive oil, divided
1 c. panko breadcrumbs
1/2 c. shredded Parmesan

Place a rack in the center of the oven and preheat to 375 degrees.

Slice eggplants into 1/2-inch-thick slices crosswise, stopping about 1/4 inch from the bottom so it stays connected along one end. (Pro tip: Place a wooden spoon handle or chopstick on either side of the eggplant and cut until your knife hits the wood. This will keep you from slicing all the way through.)

Sprinkle eggplant slices with salt and let them sit for 20 minutes. Pat the eggplant dry with paper towels.

Add marinara sauce to a 9- by 13-inch baking pan. Arrange eggplants on top of the sauce.

In a medium bowl, combine the mozzarella, garlic powder, Italian seasoning, pepper flakes and black pepper. Stuff each slice of eggplant with some of the cheese mixture and one large or 2 smaller basil leaves. Drizzle each eggplant with 1 tablespoon olive oil. Cover with foil and bake until the eggplant is just tender and sauce is bubbly, about 40 to 50 minutes.

While the eggplant is baking, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons oil in a medium skillet over medium heat. Add the panko crumbs and cook, stirring, until the crumbs are a golden brown, about 4 to 6 minutes. Cool. Combine the Parmesan and the browned panko breadcrumbs in a small bowl. Add 1/4 teaspoon each salt and pepper.

Remove the eggplant pan from the oven and uncover. Divide the bread crumb mixture evenly over the top of both eggplants. Return the pan to the oven and bake, uncovered, until the Parmesan-panko mixture is lightly browned and crispy, about 5 to 10 minutes more.

Top with torn basil leaves and serve with crusty Italian bread or pasta on the side.

Apple-Miso Grilled Pork Chops

Serves 4 to 6

The unusual combination of apple and miso paste brings a savory, sweet umaminess to these juicy grilled pork chops.

4 (1 1/2-in.-thick) bone-in pork rib chops
Kosher salt
3/4 c. apple cider
6 tbsp. white miso
3 tbsp. apple cider vinegar
3 tbsp. honey
3 tbsp. applesauce
Freshly ground black pepper

Sprinkle pork chops all over with salt, place on a wire rack set over a rimmed baking sheet, and refrigerate for at least 1 hour and up to 8 hours.

Meanwhile, bring the apple cider to a boil in a small skillet over medium-high heat. Cook, stirring, for about 6 to 8 minutes, until slightly thickened and reduced to 3 tablespoons.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the reduced cider, miso, vinegar, honey, applesauce, 1/4 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Reserve 1/3 cup of the sauce.

Prepare a gas or charcoal grill for indirect cooking over medium-high heat. (For gas grills, light the burners on only one side of the grill. For charcoal grills, place the coals on one side of the grill.)

Remove pork chops from refrigerator and season with pepper.

Place pork chops over direct heat side of grill and cook until well browned, 3 to 5 minutes per side.

Move pork chops to indirect heat side of grill. Brush both sides with apple miso sauce. Cover and cook until meat registers 135 degrees on an instant-read thermometer when inserted into thickest part of chop. Remove pork from grill, let rest for 10 minutes, brush each chop with some of the reserved sauce, and serve.

Roasted Butternut Squash, Poblano and Bean Enchiladas

Serves 4 to 6

Butternut squash and beans form a delicious partnership in these light but filling enchiladas.

3 c. cubed (about 1/2-in.) butternut squash
4 tbsp. olive oil, divided
3/4 tsp. salt, divided
1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
2 medium poblano chiles, seeded and finely chopped
1 small onion, finely chopped
1/2 tsp. ground cumin
1 (15-oz.) can pinto or black beans, rinsed and drained
12 white or yellow corn tortillas
2 (10-oz.) cans red enchilada sauce, divided
TOPPINGS, AS DESIRED:
Crumbled Cotija cheese
Red onion, diced
Ripe avocado, diced
Cilantro, chopped
Toasted pumpkin seeds

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Spray a large, rimmed baking sheet with cooking spray.

Place the butternut squash on the baking sheet. Drizzle with 1 tablespoon olive oil and sprinkle 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper over the squash. Toss to coat. Roast for about 20 minutes, stirring after 10 minutes, until just tender. Remove from oven. Reduce oven temperature to 375 degrees.

In a medium skillet, heat 1 tablespoon oil over medium-high heat. Add the poblano peppers, onion and 1/4 teaspoon salt and cook, stirring, for 4 to 6 minutes, until tender. Add cumin and cook for 1 minute longer.

In a medium bowl, combine the roasted butternut squash, poblano mixture, beans and 1/2 cup enchilada sauce.

Lay out the tortillas on a baking sheet and brush lightly on both sides with remaining 2 tablespoons oil; stack them in threes. Slide the tortillas into the oven and bake just long enough to make them soft and pliable, about 3 minutes. Remove from the oven and stack them in a single pile; cover with a kitchen towel to keep warm.

Spread about 1/2 cup sauce over the bottom of a 9- by 13-inch baking dish. Place a scant 1/3 cup filling on a warm tortilla and roll up. Lay in the baking dish, then continue filling and rolling tortillas until all are used. Spoon the remaining sauce over the enchiladas.

Bake 15 to 20 minutes, until enchiladas are heated through and sauce is bubbling around the edges. Garnish with cheese, onions, avocado, cilantro and pepitas, as desired and serve

Garlic and Cherry Tomato Baked Chicken

Serves 4 to 6

Cherry tomatoes brighten and lighten this easy braised chicken dish.

6 bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs, trimmed of excess fat (about 2 lb.)
3/4 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
1 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
1/2 c. white wine
1/2 c. chicken broth
2 (10-oz.) pkg. cherry tomatoes
10 whole cloves garlic, peeled and lightly crushed
2 sprigs fresh thyme
1 tsp. honey
Lemon wedges, for garnish

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Pat the chicken dry and season with salt and pepper.

Heat oil in an oven-safe 12-inch skillet or sauté pan over medium-high heat. Place the chicken, skin-side down, in the skillet and cook until skin is crisped and well-browned, 8 to 10 minutes. Transfer chicken to plate, skin side up.

Pour off fat from skillet. Add wine and cook, scraping up any browned bits on the bottom of the skillet, until liquid is almost evaporated, about 2 minutes.

Stir in the broth, cherry tomatoes, garlic, thyme and honey and bring to a simmer. Add the chicken back to skillet, nestling into the liquid, keeping the skin above the surface.

Transfer the skillet to the oven and bake, uncovered, until the chicken is cooked through and tender (an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of thighs should register 185 degrees), about 30 to 35 minutes. Remove from oven and transfer the chicken to a plate. Spoon the tomato mixture into a bowl and place chicken over the top. Serve garnished with lemon wedges and with hot with crusty bread, buttered noodles or rice, as desired.

Tina and Linda in "Bob's Burgers."
20th Television / Fox / TNS

300 episodes!

'Bob's Burgers' creator and cast celebrate their 'comfort show'

By TRACY BROWN
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

LOS ANGELES — When the cast and crew of "Bob's Burgers" gathered to celebrate the show's milestone 300th episode earlier this month, two key figures were missing.

Creator Loren Bouchard and actor H. Jon Benjamin – who voices the "Bob" of the title – were unexpectedly waylaid by illness and travel troubles, respectively. It was a scenario that could have been an episode of the long-running adult animated series, down to the celebration's setting, which took place in a room resembling the inside of the show's titular hamburger joint.

The only thing missing was a musical interlude.

Centering a family that runs a restaurant, "Bob's Burgers" kicked off its 16th season Sunday on Fox with its 300th episode titled "Grand Pre-Pre-Pre-Opening." The milestone episode takes things back to before the Belchers opened their family eatery.

According to Bouchard, one of the questions the writers wanted to explore in this episode was "Why is Linda doing this?"

"Bob's Burgers [the restaurant], it's got his name in it, but we sense that he can't do it without her," Bouchard says. "[Bob] says that in the show, but what do we mean when we say that?"

The look to the past also shows Bob (Benjamin) and Linda (John Roberts) preparing to welcome their first child, Tina (Dan Mintz). The Belcher clan also includes Tina's younger siblings Gene (Eugene Mirman) and Louise (Kristen Schaal).

Bouchard admits he is usually not one for celebrating episode counts – "It starts to feel a little bit like bulk pricing," he jokes – but he recognizes that the longevity of the series is something special. "Bob's Burgers" premiered in 2011.

"What you get with a show that lasts this long and has this many episodes is a different relationship with the fans," Bouchard says. "You get to have a 15-year relationship. That's like family. There are marriages that don't last that long."

Over the years, the show's dedicated audience has seen "Bob's Burgers" expand beyond television with the release of "The Bob's Burgers Movie" in 2022 as well as a touring live show of comedy and music.

Bouchard explains that the show's approach to these milestone episodes have been to "go small and deep" to avoid overstuffing them with fan service. They've treated the 100th, 200th and 300th episodes like a new pilot that centers the restaurant and family "in a very basic way" as if it were someone's introduction to the series.

The 300th episode, written by Bouchard and Nora Smith, digs into the show's core premise to reveal how Bob and Linda came to juggle a restaurant and a family at the same time.

"I started my family when I started 'Bob's,' so it's very personal to me," Bouchard says. "I like the chaos and just audacious optimism that you could have children and start a doomed-to-fail, Hail Mary of a creative project at the same time. It's why I like this family, that they did this too."

To commemorate the milestone, Bouchard and the cast discussed, in their own words edited for clarity and length, "Bob's Burgers'" status as a "comfort show," the Belcher family dynamics, memorable episodes and more.

A comfort food

It's not rare for "Bob's Burgers" to be described as a "comfort show" – something fans can turn on to unwind or fall asleep to. The cast attributes this to the show having real emotions that come from the heart.

"The sweetness of [their affection] being genuine, that's the thing," Mirman says. "It's just a mix of warmhearted and funny and sort of grounded."

"The jokes aren't taking people down a notch," Schaal says. "The show has always been in a lane that people are realizing they should come over to – the kind lane."

Bouchard says that "it's very touching and affecting" that audiences turn to the show for comfort but acknowledges it's something he can't focus on while the show's in production.

BOUCHARD: I definitely don't take it lightly. I don't want to think about it while we're making "Bob's." If I thought about it while we're making it, I would I feel like there's a scenario where I could mess it up. You don't want to shoot for comfort show, you want to shoot for edgy, attention-grabbing. [Episodes with] act breaks and big closing numbers. I know people don't mean, "I fall asleep when I see it for the first time." They mean, "I put on episodes I've seen before and it's comforting in a profoundly, sleepy way." I think being an adult by definition means at the end of the day you need something to just transition so that you can fall asleep. I'm glad that "Bob's" does that for people.

ROBERTS: We love how much comfort this brings to the world. We like being light and having a job in entertainment that makes people feel good – it makes the world a better place. That's rare and we're blessed and we're grateful.

Dinner (musical) theater

According to Bouchard, the music on the show was "a 'dare we dream' type thing in the beginning." But the reception to the show's catchy ukelele-driven theme song made him feel like there was room to push the musical elements further, like having a unique end credits and outro song for each episode.

"This sort of flea market find, slightly childlike music felt to us like of the show, but the audience had to give us permission," Bouchard says. "We had to go slowly to get that."

Once they saw the audience was on board, he felt like the show had the go ahead to hit the ground running from putting musical moments within the stories to eventually having musical episodes. While it's still something they take "moment by moment," Bouchard says he's "so glad that [the music is] part of what people seem to want from the show."

ROBERTS: I think in the earlier seasons, we were more improvising and things like that. But now it's very professional big songs. It's fun. I'm impressed by everybody.

MIRMAN: I'm truly incapable of singing. So the way we do it for me is that the person who's in charge of the music will sing one line and I will mimic it like nine times to the best of my ability. [Then] they splice together a child singing poorly that is still much better than me in real life. But it's still very fun. It's very fun to be challenged.

MINTZ: I'm kind of in Eugene's boat. I can't remember pitch for very long after I hear it, so I do have to immediately hear it and immediately repeat it. But I've been surprised at how much I do enjoy it. You do it again and again, and then the final ones are like, "Now do it and don't hold back." And you feel a real singer for, like, one line. There's also the no pressure of it because I'm singing as a person, as a character, who's not a professional singer, so it doesn't have to be that good.

Where's the beef? Belcher family dynamics

One thing that comes through in every episode of "Bob's Burgers" is just how much the Belchers love each other.

"[Linda] is a mom that pays attention and is present and shows up for her children," says Roberts, who draws from his own mother for his performance. "There's a realness there and it's very grounding for the show. … Linda's gone a little crazy sometimes, but for the most part, it's all very much stuff that you can relate to."

Perpetually in the Belchers' orbit is Teddy – handyman, loyal customer and Bob's best friend.

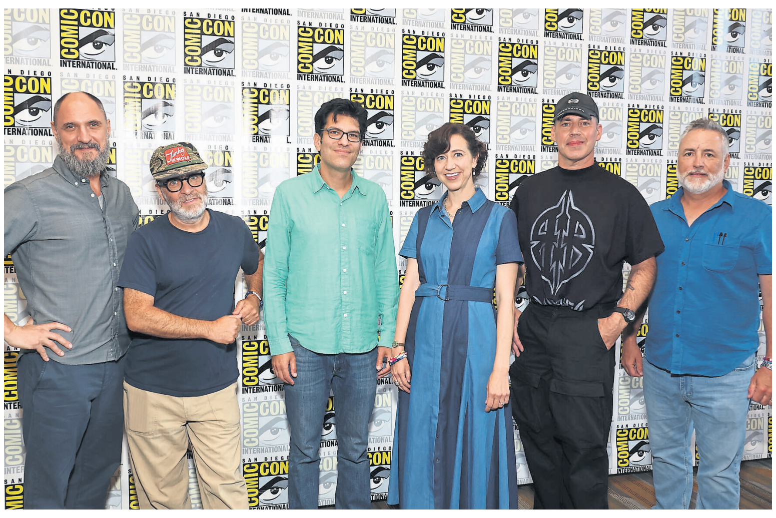
"I think of Teddy as constantly trying to inject himself into the lives of the family that he doesn't have," says Larry Murphy, who voices Teddy. "The best part about that is that they might shake their heads [at him], but they always rise to the occasion and are supportive of the character."

And as much as the Belcher children can tease or annoy each other at times, there is no doubt that they all genuinely care for one another too.

"There's a sibling camaraderie that is really lovely," Mirman says. "It reminds me of the camaraderie on TV and movies in the '80s. That era of the stuff I grew up watching."

SCHAAL: I love how they enjoy each other's company. They're usually not trying to lose the other one. I mean, in some episodes, Louise is bothering Tina and we explore that. But in general, they hang out together, they play together. They're not on their f------ iPads, separate in their own worlds. They're going on adventures. And at the end of the day, Louise has their back like no one else and she'll fight for them.

MINTZ: I think it's great for Tina to be pulled out of her comfort zone by her siblings, even though she's supposed to be the leader as the oldest. Those are some of the most fun episodes for me when Gene and Louise want to do something dangerous or against the rules or whatever. Tina's anxious for some reason and keeps being like, "Well, we shouldn't," but she gets dragged along. There's always some moment in every one of those where it's like, 'Wait, Jimmy Jr. will be there. OK, maybe I'm fine with this.' I think Tina's life would be a lot more boring if she didn't have someone make her break the rules all the time.



Amy Sussman / Getty Images / TNS

From left, Loren Bouchard, H. Jon Benjamin, Dan Mintz, Kristen Schaal, John Roberts and Larry Murphy attend 2024 Comic-Con International during "Bob's Burgers" press line at Hilton Bayfront on July 26, 2024, in San Diego.

Favorite flavors

Over the years, "Bob's Burgers" has come to be known for its various holiday episodes for Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas that often rank among viewers' favorites.

"I love on Thanksgiving when they play the marathon of stuff," Roberts says.

But holidays aren't the only flavor of memorable episodes. And even after 16 seasons, the cast says they are just as excited to flip through new scripts and record episodes together as they were when they started.

As for their favorites, Mintz says he enjoys "all the fantasy ones." Murphy agrees.

MURPHY: I like those episodes where the kids are each telling their own story – and it might not have happened. It just gets to not exist in the world of "Bob's Burgers," but it's someone's point of view telling a story, like when they built that giant robot ["The Handyman Can"]. Kind of a "Rashomon"-type idea.

SCHAAL: I like anything that's emotional. If Louise ever gets to be emotional, I get excited. Even like the one where they're looking for Bob's mom's grave ["Show Mama From the Grave"]. They're going for something that is really sad, but doing it so well. I love those episodes.

ROBERTS: I think what's really awesome is that there's an individual episode for each character that's genius. For me, I think "Lindapendent Woman" was an incredible episode. I just did an episode Holly Schlesinger wrote where it's more about Linda and her past. We all got our turn at having incredible episodes.

MIRMAN: I agree with Kristen about the ones that have an emotional arc. There is a Christmas one ["The Plight Before Christmas"], where all three kids have an event and the parents understand they can't make it to everything. Eventually Tina makes it to Louise's poetry reading where she wrote two poems and one is really sweet and about the family. I've watched that episode a bunch.

SCHAAL: Going back to the story ones. The one about the chores ["Fight at the Not Okay Chore-ral"], where Louise is butting heads with Linda about doing chores and then they tell stories about being in a wild west town. That one I love because it was about this real conflict. And the funny thing is, my daughter has requested to watch that one several times. I think it's because Linda breaks down and says, "I'm wrong, I give up," and my kid is thrilled to see the mom say that.

We're here, we're gruyere, get used it

"Bob's Burgers" has often been hailed for its inclusivity. As a series living in "the kind lane," the characters are accepted for who they are – even if there's gentle ribbing at times.

"Nobody's trying to change anyone," Roberts says. "They're just trying to make them better human beings."

"And they don't have to defend who they are," adds Schaal. "There's complete acceptance."

At a time when trans and queer people are increasingly targeted by right-wing politicians and activists through legislation and dehumanizing rhetoric – LGBTQ+-friendly shows such as "Bob's Burgers" can, for some, feel like a refuge. Bouchard explains how the show's approach to being inclusive is intentional.

BOUCHARD: One of the simple tricks that we do is you just do it. You don't have to shine a light on it. What I think is interesting about acceptance and tolerance and inclusivity – all those things have become capitalized words, and they almost lose their value when they're not just part of your daily life. Your storytelling has to be about something other than that. That's not going to be as satisfying as just put it in the character and let it be their daily. They get up feeling accepting and inclusive and normalizing, and they go to bed that way. They don't learn that f----- lesson in the middle of a half-hour show. That's fine that it exists. Maybe sometimes, as a culture, we need to all come together and learn a lesson. [But] "Bob's" is in the business of not writing those episodes. We're in the business of writing those characters without fanfare.

And I give credit to my parents. I think my sister and I were weird in the normal weird way – weird kids are normal. A lot of parents make room for that, and love their kids no matter how they express themselves as little kids. I guess some don't, but I am glad to have come up in that. To me, it feels natural. To me, it's not a stretch. The way to do it is to just live it, just be it, and assume that when it's on paper and it seems normal to you, hopefully it'll feel reassuring and comforting to other folks too.

MOVIE REVIEW

A24 / TNS

Emily Blunt, left, and Dwayne Johnson in "The Smashing Machine."

'The Smashing Machine' an unusual, appealingly weird sports biopic

By KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Benny Safdie wants to challenge our expectations of the traditional sports movie. His first solo directorial outing without his brother Josh, "The Smashing Machine" is a biopic that zigs when you expect it to zag, parries rather than jabs, feints before delivering a punch.

"The Smashing Machine," about mixed martial arts fighter and UFC heavyweight champion Mark Kerr, played by an almost unrecognizable Dwayne Johnson, takes a shape and form that is not what we're used to in traditional sports movies. It's more like a jazzy improvisation on the formula that references familiar rhythms but marches entirely to the beat of its own drum, and it's the kind of film that forces the audience to wrestle with what, exactly, we want to see from these kinds of narratives – tragedy or triumph? Safdie offers both, and neither.

Based on a 2002 documentary directed by John Hyams, Safdie's "The Smashing Machine," which he produced, wrote, directed and edited, mimics the documentary-style approach. Working with cinematographer Maceo Bishop, Safdie utilizes a variety of film formats from VHS to 16mm to 35mm to capture Kerr's roller-coaster ride through the nascent world of professional MMA fighting in the late 1990s.

Mark's soft-spoken interviews layered over his bloody brutality in the ring during a fighting tournament in Brazil is our introduction to the study in contrasts that animates the film. This is a portrait of a mostly good-natured gentle giant whose job is inflicting – and enduring – violence, but who speaks sweetly to older women in the doctor's office, and to the medical receptionists who help to fill his prescriptions for increasingly potent pain medication. Mark can headbutt an opponent without a second thought but cannot easily communicate his needs to his spitfire girlfriend Dawn (Emily Blunt) for fear of hurting her feelings.

Mark and Dawn are opposites trying to make it work: she's a bit of a wanton thrill-seeker who wants to feel like the most important person in his life, he's a perfectionist and a bit of a fuddy-duddy. "My tummy," he whines about

> **'The Smashing Machine'**
>
> ★★★
>
> **MPA rating:** R (for language and some drug abuse)
>
> **Running time:** 2:03
>
> **How to watch:** In theaters

a carnival ride. The savagery of Mark's professional fights pale in comparison to the emotional warfare he and Dawn inflict on each other, often in hushed tones. When their resentments crescendo into an operatic climax, it's far more harrowing anything he experiences in the octagon.

Blunt and Johnson first co-starred in "Jungle Cruise," and are close friends, and the two share a palpable chemistry in moments of both love and conflict. But there's never any question that Mark and Dawn are a match made in hell, their dysfunction doing battle with their clear affection for each other.

Mark thrives in the regulated space of training and fighting, following the rules even when others break them. Johnson's performance isn't just transformed in voice and manner, but is one of carefully calibrated control, as if Mark's making himself smaller, quieter to appear less intimidating. Moments of explosive violence and emotion do erupt out of him, especially when he's struggling with his opiate addiction.

Mark overcomes that particular hurdle rather quickly, thanks in part to the one healthy relationship he has, with friend, trainer and competitor Mark Coleman (played by pro MMA fighter Ryan Bader). There's never an ounce of bad blood between the genial Kerr and Coleman, even when you're expecting rivalry, as the two prepare to potentially face-off in the PRIDE Fighting Championships 2000 Grand Prix in Japan. Instead, the friends are simply happy to be together. Bader, while a bit limited in his range, is nevertheless a fascinating screen presence as the steady Coleman, capably undertaking a meaty role and making the character interesting enough that you wish there were far more of him in the picture.

Safdie offers up an unusual and appealingly weird sports biopic that is tastefully crafted and impeccably directed, anchored by Johnson and Blunt's powerhouse performances, Bishop's textured cinematography and Nala Sinephro's loose, abstract, jazz-inspired score that echoes the film's themes, juxtaposing hard and soft. But Safdie's script is at times formless and somewhat baggy. It's a bit hard to track the emotional journey when the beats feel like they hit in the wrong place and time.

It becomes clear that Safdie is intentionally denying a big, flashy "win the game" kind of film, offering instead a cerebral examination of the quotidian, workmanlike drudgery of being a professional athlete who never became a superstar household name, still shouldering the work, the struggle, the bad days, quibbling over contracts and rules, taking every hit without complaint. "A day without pain is like a day without sunshine," Mark quips, and if there are any major revelations to take away from "The Smashing Machine," it's that Mark Kerr seems like a truly nice guy, one who had all the guts, and not enough glory.

SERIES REVIEW

In *'Chad Powers,'* Glen Powell puts on a silly face

By ROBERT LLOYD
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

In "Chad Powers," premiering Tuesday on Hulu, Glen Powell, who co-created the series with Michael Waldron ("Loki"), plays Russ Holliday, a disgraced collegiate quarterback. In a quick telegraphing of character, we meet him driving a Cybertruck, the official vehicle of shallow narcissists, on his way to a Hollywood nightclub (the official hangout of shallow narcissists). Eight years earlier, at the climax of a season that included suspension, tabloid headlines and "the Las Vegas freeway incident," he blew a chance at redemption, when, after a game-losing mistake, he punched a fan on the sidelines, who crashed into his son, a sick child in a wheelchair.

Now he's lying to himself that his exile was football was in fact a good thing. "I never would have done 'The Masked Singer,' never would have met my buddies in crypto and NFT." Nevertheless, he's excited about going back to the game, playing for the Vegas Vipers in the XFL league (in real life, it's a team that no longer exists in a league that no longer exists, which I know only because I looked it up – and it was the worst team as well). Then comes the news that the wheelchair-bound child has died, bringing Russ's moment of (greatest) shame back into the public eye; the offer is withdrawn and his agent drops him.

So Russ is a bad guy, but he's also a sad guy, broken inside, living in a room filled with old trophies in a house belonging to his father (Toby Huss), a movie makeup artist. Sent to deliver some prosthetics to the

Zac Popik / Disney / TNS

Russ Holliday (Glen Powell), left, decides to use the prosthetics his father created to become Chad Powers, with some help from Danny (Frankie A. Rodriguez), who performs as the team's mascot.

Fox Studios lot, he sees a billboard for "Mrs. Doubtfire," the 1993 Robin Williams nanny-impersonation film, at the exact moment he hears a report of open tryouts for the South Georgia Catfish, which has lost two quarterbacks to transfers. A light goes on, and he takes off with his father's kit and heads for Georgia, where he will become Chad Powers.

Restricted by the materials he has on hand, Russ gives himself a big nose, inflated cheeks, long hair and prosthetic teeth – not quite Jerry Lewis-crazy, but nothing you won't notice – which he'll top off with an unplaceable hick accent. It's the very look – and name – that Eli Manning adopted for the 2022 stunt the series is based on, from his ESPN series "Eli's Places."

Arriving on campus, he's immediately tackled by Danny Cruz (Frankie A. Rodriguez), the team mascot, who takes him for a school shooter – not so much to protect his fellow students but for the celebrity it might give him. With Russ' fake face in disarray, Danny recognizes him from the tabloids, grasps the situation – helpful to any viewers who haven't figured it out for themselves – and appoints himself Russ's helper, "partly because I want to believe that we're all human and no one is beyond second chances and partly because if this works you'll owe me, which I like."

Any objection a viewer might raise about, say, lack of identification, transcripts or not being enrolled as a student will be quickly dispensed with, as Russ-as-Chad quickly proceeds to tryouts, where his howitzer arm impresses head coach Jake Hudson (Steve Zahn), under pressure to deliver wins. His daughter, and recently named assistant coach, Ricky (Perry Mattfeld), is a former track star who lost her mojo and is now regarded merely as a nepo baby, or fears that she is; she's trying to be taken seriously. Coach Dobbs (Clayne Crawford), the quarterback coach, is dismissive and insulting; Coach Byrd (Quentin Plair) isn't. The team's remaining quarterback, Gerry Dougan (Colton Ryan) is a caricature, a go-getting, God-thanking player of little talent and fragile ego expressly made to be mocked. (It feels a little cheap.) The rest of the team remains undifferentiated.

The bizarre prosthetics and silly voice make it hard to take Chad quite as seriously as the series would like us to. Although it serves the practical and philosophical purposes of the story, Chad, who comes off as a sweet idiot, doesn't make sense as a person Russ would imagine or inhabit. (Russ disappears completely when he's Chad; oddly, or perhaps not, he's more compelling company when out of costume, if also a worse person. It's kind of a relief.) Other characters regard Chad as strange without seeing him as suspicious and accept the increasingly ridiculous stories Russ invents to keep selling the lie. Well, he's winning games, so maybe no one wants to look too hard. But that the truth eventually will out is clear from the moment he puts on the phony face, and that at some point, those who trusted him will feel betrayed. That isn't a spoiler, it's just Hollywood physics.

Though the series was inspired by Manning's stunt, it's fed by some well-traveled, conventional tropes. There's the story of the bad person who becomes a better person by pretending to be one, which is the direction Russ is indirectly headed, or why are we watching? (Dustin Hoffman in "Tootsie": "I was a better man as a woman than I was as a man.") There's the one about the mysterious phenom who turns around a team's fortunes – the basis of "Damn Yankees " and "The Natural" and, in its way, "Ted Lasso." Although the name Chad Powers derives from Manning's prank, it's also suggestive of Kenny Powers, Danny McBride's character in "Eastbound & Down," a washed-up pitcher who tumbles from the major leagues to substitute teaching at his old middle school. Down on their luck athletes are also at the center of "Cinderella Man," "Mr. Baseball" and the recent Owen Wilson comedy "Stick." I will say again that "The Bad News Bears" is one of the most influential films of the 20th century.

As the six-episode series goes on, it slips out of comedy into drama, as Russ and Danny weather the stresses of their conspiracy, Chad and Ricky navigate their sub-romantic friendship, and Coach Hudson frets over keeping his job (and his notably absent wife). The question of identity that underscores the series rises to the surface. And the more serious tone gives the valuable Zahn – a very fine actor often hired to be funny but playing absolutely straight – and the quietly intense Mattfield some lifelike father-daughter scenes to play, in fraught and affectionate moods. (Only Wynn Everett as Tricia, the new head of the boosters' association, is meant to be funny throughout, and is.) There is a lot of loose angst flying around by the end of the season, which is obviously not, or not meant to be, the end of the story. Nothing is concluded.

All the movies of Paul Thomas Anderson, *ranked*

By MARK OLSEN
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

Merrick Morton / Warner Bros. Pictures / TNS

Paul Thomas Anderson, left, with Leonardo DiCaprio and Benicio del Toro on the set of "One Battle After Another."

More so than with other directors, it's always tempting to overly psychologize Paul Thomas Anderson's films, looking for traces of his personal development and hints of autobiography: the father figures of "Magnolia" or "The Master," the partnership of "Phantom Thread," parenthood in the new "One Battle After Another." Yet two things truly set his work apart. There's the incredibly high level of craft in each of them, giving each a unique feel, sensibility and visual identity, and also the deeply felt humanism: a pure love of people, for all their faults and foibles.

Anderson is an 11-time Academy Award nominee without ever having won, a situation that could rectify itself soon enough, and it speaks to the extremely high bar set by his filmography that one could easily reverse the following list and still end up with a credible, if perhaps more idiosyncratic ranking. Reorder the films however you like – they are all, still, at the very least, extremely good. Simply put, there's no one doing it like him.

Perhaps nothing marks Anderson as a filmmaker from the '90s as much as his impeccable use of music, from the drowned-in-sound deluge of "Boogie Nights" to his ongoing collaboration with Radiohead's Jonny Greenwood as a composer. So just to add to the arguability of the following list, we've also noted a favorite song or two from each movie, the song titles often becoming surprise summations of the plots themselves.

This list is made in good faith, without any purposeful stuntery (honest). Feel free to let us know how your opinions vary.

10. 'Licorice Pizza' (2021)

Look, we all did some questionable things during the peak of the pandemic, so Anderson can be forgiven for making a sweet, nostalgic look back at growing up in his beloved San Fernando Valley in the 1970s. There is much to like here in its story of a hustling teenage-boy entrepreneur and the twentysomething woman who becomes his friend, partner and maybe more, but considering the epic run of Anderson's other recent films, "Licorice Pizza" just feels lacking somehow, lackadaisical rather than merely easygoing. The sparking dynamic between leads Cooper Hoffman and Alana Haim, both making their feature debut, energizes the movie, while Bradley Cooper's gonzo take on producer Jon Peters nearly justifies the entire endeavor on its own.

NEEDLE DROPS: Chris Norman and Suzi Quatro, "Stumblin' In"; Paul McCartney and Wings, "Let Me Roll It"

9. 'Punch Drunk Love' (2002)

A transitional film to get him out of the enfant terrible period of his earliest work, "Punch Drunk Love" remains a fulcrum point in Anderson's career. A delicate balancing act of romance, comedy and whimsy, the film now actually feels a little overworked, as if Anderson was wrestling certain internal impulses in trying to purposefully make something light. There are moments of pure movie magic: A simple scene of a nascent couple (played by Adam Sandler and Emily Watson) walking down a Valley side street becomes a moment of spiritual transformation thanks to some sneaky lighting tricks. Sandler, in the performance that would launch the still-blossoming side of his career that's exploring more demanding roles, captures the bold sense of growth that motivates the entire movie.

NEEDLE DROP: Shelley Duvall, "He Needs Me"

KPA / United Archives via ZUMA Press Wire / TNS

Luis Guzman and Adam Sandler in "Punch-Drunk Love."

8. 'Hard Eight' (1996)

Much like "Bottle Rocket," the 1996 debut feature from that other upstart Anderson Wes (no relation), "Hard Eight" suffers only in comparison to the richness of what would come after. For many other filmmakers, this would easily be their best work. Made in the rush of post-"Pulp Fiction" crime thrillers, the film is a perceptive character study that showcases Anderson's sensitivity with actors, including early turns by John C. Reilly, Gwyneth Paltrow and a one-scene Philip Seymour Hoffman. The film was originally going to be titled "Sydney" after Philip Baker Hall's character, a courtly man of another era who knows how to handle his business, and the veteran character actor truly shines in the rare spotlight. The world of low-level gamblers is evocatively drawn and Anderson displays an unexpected tenderness to those who inhabit it.

NEEDLE DROP: Brenton Wood, "Love Is Free"

Impress / United Archives via ZUMA Press Wire / TNS

Julianne Moore and Mark Wahlberg in the movie "Boogie Nights."

7. 'The Master' (2012)

"The Master" features two of the greatest performances in any of Anderson's films, Philip Seymour Hoffman and Joaquin Phoenix throwing themselves completely into evoking, respectively, Lancaster Dodd, the self-styled leader of a somewhat-sham philosophical movement, and Freddie Quell, a WWII veteran, alcoholic drifter and willing acolyte. As the film explores the distinctions between behaving from instinct versus intellect – a battle between heart and mind – there is a chilly distance that Anderson never quite bridges. Possibly undone by prerelease expectations that the film would be an explicit exposé of the origins of Scientology, "The Master" (as with all of Anderson's historical films) is simultaneously that and not that, drawing from the life of L. Ron Hubbard while also insistently charting its own course.

NEEDLE DROPS: Philip Seymour Hoffman, "Slow Boat to China"; Helen Forrest, "Changing Partners"

6. 'Boogie Nights' (1997)

Anderson was only 27 years old when "Boogie Nights" was released, which felt like a monumental achievement given its sweeping ensemble study of the rise and decline of the alternate L.A.-based studio system of pornography as the 1970s gave way to the '80s. Mark Wahlberg and an impressive prosthetic play a boy "blessed with one special thing," as he enters an industry all too willing to take everything he has to give. There now seems to be a bit of snickering immaturity in the film's garish period trappings, though the emotional acuity and empathetic consideration of even the most minor of characters still makes "Boogie Nights" remarkable. Spawning not one but two soundtrack releases, the film had the air of a cultural phenomenon about it and anointed Anderson as a generational talent, earning him his first Academy Award nomination for the screenplay.

NEEDLE DROPS: The Commodores, "Machine Gun"; Electric Light Orchestra, "Livin' Thing"

5. 'Magnolia' (1999)

As if "Boogie Nights" wasn't audacious enough, Anderson boldly followed it up with a film of naked vulnerability: an emotional weather report unafraid to risk embarrassment in examining a perpetual dark night of the soul. The everything-turned-up-to-11 extremes of "Magnolia" are both its biggest virtues and largest drawbacks, lending the film a remarkable sense of propulsion as it interweaves a complex tapestry of L.A. lives revolving around a long-running television game show. Among those characters is a damaged male self-help guru played by Tom Cruise in a big-swing performance he has never quite topped before or since. Anderson used a few older actors known for their work in the films of two of his avowed heroes, Jonathan Demme and Robert Altman, as if he were working through their influence to find out who he really wanted to be as a filmmaker – and perhaps even as a person.

NEEDLE DROPS: Aimee Mann, "Wise Up"; Supertramp, "Goodbye Stranger"

4. 'Phantom Thread' (2017)

Anderson's films now tend to arrive under a veil of secrecy – it's often unclear what the movie's about ahead of time. Prerelease rumors around "Phantom Thread" had it based on fashion designer Charles James and also something of a romantic ghost story, which turned out misdirections from the charming, offbeat comedic drama it turned out to be. The controlled life of fastidious English designer Reynolds Woodcock (Day-Lewis) is upended by the mischievous, headstrong European émigré Alma Elson (a magnetic Vicky Krieps). There is a clever simplicity to the film, laced within the hidden complexities of a fine piece of tailoring. Aching, enigmatic and at times downright hilarious, the film magnificently combines the energies of a then-essentially-unknown Krieps, as she makes a perfect foil to Day-Lewis' roiled titan.

NEEDLE DROPS: Oscar Peterson, "My Foolish Heart"; Jonny Greenwood, "For the Hungry Boy"

3. 'One Battle After Another' (2025)

All of Anderson's films grow and gain depth over time, so this film could eventually move up a spot or two. Loosely inspired by Thomas Pynchon's "Vineland," the film mostly borrows vibes: the struggle of how to move forward when it feels your path has run its course. Anderson employs many of the strategies of his historical films to evocative results, creating a distorted dystopia out of modern times. Somehow equal parts angry and optimistic, hopeful and defeated, "Battle" follows Bob (Leonardo DiCaprio, antic and broken), a former member of a revolutionary cadre who reenters the fight when his daughter is endangered by enemies from his past. A satirical action-comedy and a mediation on family, with an enviable ensemble including Benicio del Toro, Regina Hall, Sean Penn, Teyana Taylor and newcomer Chase Infiniti, "One Battle After Another" is a movie with the courage and conviction to fearlessly meet its moment.

NEEDLE DROPS: Gil Scott-Heron, "Revolution Will Not Be Televised"; Steely Dan, "Dirty Work"

2. 'Inherent Vice' (2014)

A more straightforward and faithful Pynchon adaptation, "Inherent Vice" is part silly and part sad, as stalwart stoner detective Larry "Doc" Sportello (Joaquin Phoenix) is drawn into a labyrinthine world of power and corruption in post-Manson Los Angeles by his wayward ex-girlfriend. Living in a fog of melancholy and regret, Doc still holds a torch for Shasta Fay, so his work on her behalf spins a complex web of emotional complications as the film grapples with the fallout of the end of the 1960s and the onset of the big bummer realization that business and money will always prevail. Reuniting with Phoenix in a nuanced turn and working with another extended cast that also featured Josh Brolin, Katherine Waterston, Jeannie Berlin, Hong Chau, Reese Witherspoon and Martin Short, Anderson focuses what could be a sprawling mess into something that knows just where it's going. The movie reveals itself to you, layer by layer, incident by incident, in a way that becomes downright intoxicating.

NEEDLE DROPS: Can, "Vitamin C"; Neil Young, "Journey Through the Past"

1. 'There Will Be Blood' (2007)

Drawing inspiration from Upton Sinclair's 1927 novel, "Oil," Anderson's best, most accomplished movie levels up from the free-wheeling antics of his early films to something intentionally serious and epic, with more than a touch of the visionary. Transforming the settling of California into a revisionist allegory for American expansionism, the film features a ferocious, for-the-ages performance by Daniel Day-Lewis as Daniel Plainview, who goes from a lone man literally crawling his way out of a hole in the ground to a ruthless oil baron, willing to sacrifice anything to claim a little more for himself. Which is not to say the film lacks Anderson's typical wit or humor, as in the infamous "I drink your milkshake!" scene during a final showdown between Plainview and his nemesis, a scheming evangelist played by Paul Dano. With "There Will Be Blood," Anderson stepped confidently into the mature phase of his career, from which he has never stopped hurtling forward.

NEEDLE DROP: Johannes Brahms, "Violin Concerto in D Major"

BOOKS

Teacher and ghostwriter Veronica Bane shares secrets of her theme-park novel

By KELLI SKYE FADROSKI
The Orange County Register (TNS)

Working at an amusement park isn't all fun and games.

In author Veronica Bane's debut YA novel, "Difficult Girls," Greta Riley Green finds out there's something sinister going on at her seemingly innocent summer gig at Hyper Kid Magic Land.

Bane, who hails from San Diego and now lives in Los Angeles, spent her formative years employed at a Southern California theme park. She loosely based the book and its cast of characters on her own real-life experiences and interactions.

Bane said working in the entertainment department of a theme park, which she doesn't name, felt glamorous. "It was basically Hollywood," she says.

"I got to watch these incredible performers, and they were all so talented," she recalled. "As an usher, I got to watch them, and then I became a face character, so I got to be part of it."

But much like Greta encounters, there's more than the bright lights, flashy live performances, spinning cotton candy and the wide-eyed wonderment of children and adults alike. Thrust into the hordes of theme park goers, Bane said she experienced unwanted advances and lewd commentary.

"I'd just have to smile because there was no one there to help me," she said. "That sense of powerlessness, especially how men could take those positions of power and punish you with them, I wanted Greta and the other girls in the story to have the opportunity to push back on that."

And push back she does.

In an effort to shake a reputation-altering mistake she made in high school, Greta in the novel takes the job at Hyper Kid Magic Land to rebrand herself and make new friends. She finally finds herself fitting in, even seemingly befriending Mercy Goodwin, one of the beloved stars of the theme park's live productions.

Suddenly, it all goes south, and the mystery surrounding a decades-old death inside the park comes roaring back to life.

"Greta is a lot like me at 16," Bane said. "I was eager to start a job. I was like 'You know what, it's time for a new path. I'm going to get a cardigan and it's going to be a whole new me.' Greta is escaping some trauma as well, but that energy is definitely me."

Though "Difficult Girls" is billed as Bane's debut novel, she's written 11 books – including celebrity biographies and New York Times bestsellers – as a ghostwriter. She can't discuss her ghost-writing efforts, but she says she's thrilled to finally see her own name on a book cover.

"It's surreal because I had gotten used to going into a Barnes & Noble or an indie bookstore and seeing my books that I've written in window displays or on tables and even some of those books being recommended to me by the kind salespeople, who had no idea I had written it," she said with a laugh.

"I'm always excited to see my writing, even if it's not my book."

Bane, a Chapman University graduate, is also an LA-area high school English teacher, and her students, past and present, have reached out to her about seeing "Difficult Girls" now in stores and available online.

"I've had a lot of students messaging me from all over the country saying, 'Look! I found it,'" she said. "It's been cool to feel like the dream has been … not fulfilled because hopefully there's more to come, but I've reached a point that I can say, 'Yes! I wrote that and can talk about it!'"

Interested in a wide range of books, Bane says she'll read just about anything. She's into adult contemporary, literary fiction, rom-coms and fantasy. She has a soft spot for YA books, and not only because she's now written one.

"That's a special time when someone's figuring out who they are," she said. "That's always spoken to me."

She's a champion of Annabelle's Book Club in Studio City, the YA-focused shop founded by 18-year-old Annabelle Chang. She also frequents Black Cat Fables in Monrovia to sink into one of their cozy chairs with a book. And she still stops by Mysterious Galaxy Bookstore in San Diego when she visits her hometown.

"What I love about a bookstore is that you can go there and immediately feel safe," she said. "You are going there to find something that makes you feel better or that takes you to somewhere new. When you walk into Mysterious Galaxy, you really do feel that. They also have excellent stickers. There's one that says 'Persist Out of Spite' with a little tiger on it, which is my motto of this year."

Following the devastating Eaton and Palisades fires in Southern California earlier this year, Bane partnered with bookstores such as Black Cat Fables, Diesel and DYM to host book drives open to those affected by the fires. They collected nearly 15,000 new and like-new books to distribute to kids, teens, parents and teachers who lost books in the fires.

Bane credits her husband, actor and director Brendan Mitchell, for helping her organize during that time.

"He's someone who's always cheering me on, and when I'm in the fetal position during a deadline, he's the one being like 'You can do this,'" she said. "He's always surprising me and going to book stops with me. For the book drive, he drove around with me and was carrying all of the boxes of books all over. He's such a thoughtful, quiet and strong presence and I couldn't do all of this without him."

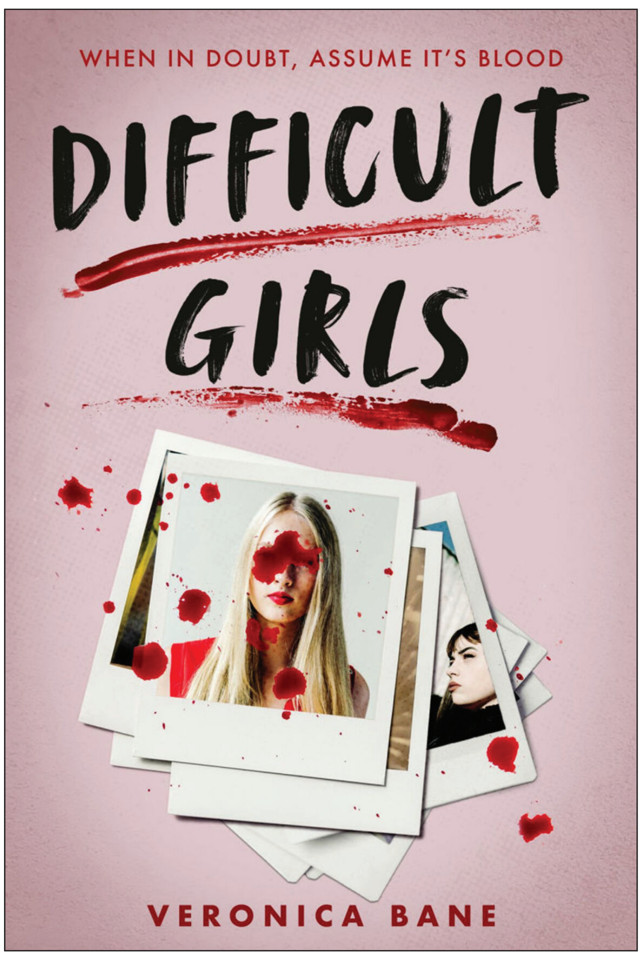
However, she did leave his name out of the printed bio on the "Difficult Girls" book jacket.

"He did say, 'Why'd my dog get named in the bio and I did not,'" she said with a laugh. "Our dog's name is really cool (Bodhi). We also have two cats that didn't make the bio! But honestly, he's one of the reasons why I can write at all because balancing being an author and a teacher is a lot.

"People ask, 'How do you do it?' Some days it is really hard. I wake up at 5 a.m. and get to work an hour early so I can write and do tasks in my car before I teach and when I walk in, I'm a teacher until I get home at night, when there's still writing to be done. We do get out and go for walks with our dog every day because I do need that break and that connection."

In whatever spare time she has, Bane explores all that Los Angeles has to offer, including taking in obscure films in old theaters, trying out new restaurants and going to other author events at bookstores.

"I'm all about finding good food, and I'm constantly in search of a good cookie," she said. "My favorite small bakery closed, and they had the best cookies I've ever had in my life, so I remain on the hunt for a good cookie. I'm open to suggestions."



Penguin Random House / TNS

BESTSELLERS

Here are the bestsellers for the week that ended Saturday, Sept. 20, compiled from data from independent and chain bookstores, book wholesalers and independent distributors nationwide, powered by Circana BookScan.

Hardcover fiction

1. The Secret of Secrets. Dan Brown. Doubleday
2. The Academy. Hilderbrand/Cunningham. Little, Brown
3. The Last Letter (signed). Rebecca Yarros. Amara
4. Assistant to the Villain (special ed.). Hannah Nicole Maehrer. Red Tower
5. Katabasis (deluxe ed.). R.F. Kuang. Harper Voyager
6. Among the Burning Flowers (deluxe ed.). Samantha Shannon. Bloomsbury
7. Buckeye. Patrick Ryan. Random House
8. Atmosphere. Taylor Jenkins Reid. Ballantine
9. My Friends. Fredrik Backman. Atria
10. Among the Burning Flowers. Samantha Shannon. Bloomsbury

Hardcover nonfiction

1. The Let Them Theory. Mel Robbins. Hay House
2. Poems & Prayers. Matthew McConaughey. Crown
3. Good Things. Samin Nosrat. Random House
4. The Biblio Diet. Jordan Rubin. Worthy
5. Confronting Evil. O'Reilly/Hammer. St. Martin's
6. All the Way to the River. Elizabeth Gilbert. Riverhead
7. The Bradshaw Family Cookbook. Terry Bradshaw et al. Flatiron
8. The Book of Sheen. Charlie Sheen. Gallery
9. History Matters. David McCullough. Simon & Schuster
10. The Complete America's Test Kitchen TV Show Cookbook. America's Test Kitchen

Trade paperback

1. The Gingerbread Bakery. Laurie Gilmore. HarperCollins
2. The Surrogate Mother. Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen
3. Wild Card. Elsie Silver. Bloom
4. Called to Take a Bold Stand. Jack Hibbs. Harvest House
5. Cozy Nightmare Glow-in-the-Dark Coloring. Thunder Bay
6. Counting Miracles. Nicholas Sparks. Dell
7. Remarkably Bright Creatures. Shelby Van Pelt. Ecco
8. Sorrow and Starlight. Peckham/Valenti. King's Hollow
9. The Tenant. Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen
10. Do Not Disturb. Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen

Reprinted from Publishers Weekly.

REVIEW

She leaves her husband for do-it-yourself witness protection

By MAREN LONGBELLA
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

Who hasn't dreamed of chucking it all, assuming a new identity and starting over?

Karen Palmer didn't dream it, she lived it, except her experience – or at least the impetus of it – was a nightmare she writes about in her memoir "She's Under Here."

In 1989, Palmer, her new husband and two daughters from a previous marriage entered what she refers to as a "do-it-yourself witness protection program." They sold most of their belongings, left behind whatever they couldn't pack up, and fled: "Driving east out of California, we decided on our new names … Hidden under the driver's seat was a guidebook on how to create new identities, but it couldn't tell us who we'd be."

It was that "previous marriage" that propelled the family to leave everything they'd known. Seeing no way to handle her abusive first husband, who continually harassed her, telling her at one point that he'd cut off her head "and stick it in the refrigerator for the girls to find," Palmer took what she believed was the only avenue open to her and her family.

She admits that running away might be her thing; she used her first husband to escape her childhood home, after all (she was a teen when she hooked up with him, a much older man). But when he does the unthinkable (no spoilers here), her hand is forced. She must act.

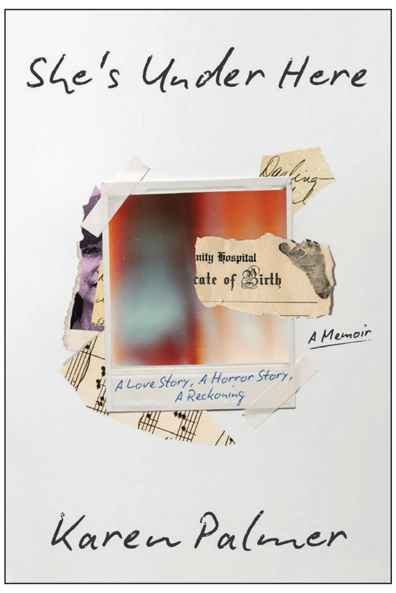
Palmer doesn't start at the beginning. She dumps the reader into the thick of the situation, her descriptions visceral, the fear real, as she negotiates life on the run. Once she gets to a semblance of safety, she backtracks and fills in details about how she met her first husband, how the violence began. She goes back even further, cluing us in on her childhood and her reasons for the choices she made.

It's true that we don't get the first husband's side of things in "She's Under Here." Palmer can't provide that context without inviting back into her life the violence she is trying to avoid.

So she offers the point of view of family members: Palmer's mother was never happy with her choice of spouse the first time around, and her second husband, a former friend of the first, witnessed the brutish behavior. The difficulty of a true portrait, she finds, is her first husband's two-sided nature. He could be very charming when necessary, undermining any attempts to get help from law enforcement – or even her own lawyer.

Throughout the harrowing "She's Under Here," Palmer asks herself what makes a mother, ruminating on whether stealing her own children was the right thing to do. For her, solid answers are elusive (maybe not so much for the reader). She aims the reckoning of the subtitle, "A Love Story, a Horror Story, a Reckoning," at the situation, but also at herself.

Where she lands and how she gets there makes for truly compelling reading.



Algonquin Books / TNS

REVIEW

Meryl Streep played her, now Susan Orlean goes on a 'Joyride'

By MARION WINIK
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

If you've ever read a Susan Orlean book – "The Orchid Thief," "Rin Tin Tin" or "The Library Book," say – and didn't want it to end, here's good news. There's more. Her memoir, "Joyride," a chronicle of her career in narrative nonfiction, shares the backstory and process of each of her books in edifying detail.

From the title on out, "Joyride" acknowledges the great fortune that Orlean has had in knowing exactly what she wanted to do with her life from an early age and the pleasure she has derived from realizing it, while convincingly conveying the vast amount of work she has put in along the way. The message is not just to follow your bliss, but to follow your bliss with every resource you have, every erg of energy, every mote of passion and every ounce of confidence you can muster.

Confidence, the nonfiction writer says, is the "single essential element in good writing." Well, maybe: Having as much raw talent as Susan Orlean is also useful. Modestly, she leaves that thought to the reader. Orlean's self-presentation sheds light on the difference between confidence and ego.

She opens the book with an account of her process in writing "The American Man at Age Ten" for Esquire in the early 1990s, showing us why this adorable piece – they wanted Macaulay Culkin, she gave them an ordinary kid from New Jersey – is her most anthologized.

She then goes back to the beginning, with family snapshots and diary excerpts accompanying loving portraits of her parents, who sound so charming it's a surprise to read, "I assume there was a spell when my parents enjoyed each other's company, but that was before my time." While "Joyride" is more a professional memoir than a personal one, her own miserable first marriage and happier second one are candidly discussed, too, with a funny detour between them with a Bhutanese tour guide.

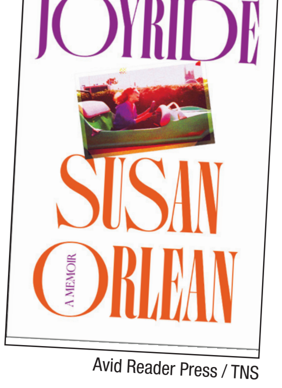
By the time she was in college, Orlean knew she wanted to "write factual stories with as much wit and audacity and inventiveness as I associated with fiction."

Orlean knew she wanted to write for the New Yorker. And she took dead aim, beginning at alternative newsweeklies in Portland, Oregon, and Boston, selling a cover story on cult leader Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh to the Village Voice, moving on to Vogue and Rolling Stone.

In developing the concept for her first book, "Saturday Night," she crystallizes the process that will become her signature: "I would voyage through an idea. I would take a frame and place it around a wide variety of circumstances and people and settings."

There are many highlights: The great good fun of "The Orchid Thief" becoming the Oscar-winning movie "Adaptation" is one of them. "Watching Meryl Streep, projected on a nine-foot screen, say 'I'm Susan Orlean' was an out-of-body experience," she writes.

You'll feel it, too. This down-to-earth leviathan invites you to sit right next to her on her joyride, and even imagine you might take your own version.

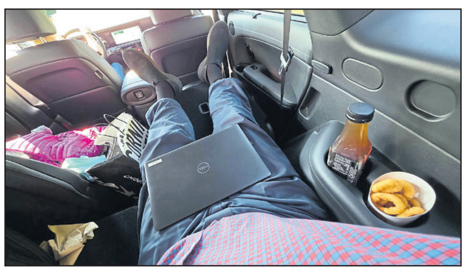


Avid Reader Press / TNS

AUTOMOTIVE

AUTO REVIEWS

(Off and on) road trippin' in the Hyundai Palisade XRT Pro



By HENRY PAYNE
The Detroit News (TNS)

Photos by Henry Payne / The Detroit News / TNS

ABOVE: The 2026 Hyundai Palisade XRT Pro is built for off-roading with all-terrain tires and off-road modes like SAND and MUD. **TOP RIGHT:** You never know when Google Maps will navigate you off-road. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Henry Payne works on his laptop in the third row of the 2026 Hyundai Palisade XRT Pro using the second-row seats as an ottoman – and trays for his Burger King onion rings and drink.

The 2026 Hyundai Palisade has an off-road-focused XRT Pro model because, well, you never know when Google Maps will navigate you off-road.

Heading east from Niagara Falls toward Watkins Glen International Raceway, Google sent me off Interstate 86 and onto a series of two-lane state roads – including dirt roads.

Had I been driving a sports car, I would have cursed Google (how dare you dirty my sleek stallion!). But my Palisade XRT Pro was in its element.

I punched the TERRAIN button on the dash, then selected SAND mode (MUD and SNOW are also on offer) and the Hyundai engaged all four Hankook all-terrain tires. I charged up the steep New York hills, leaving a rooster tail of dust behind me.

"Look at the fall colors!" I exclaimed as the V-6 engine roared past trees painted orange, red and yellow.

"Look out for farm trucks coming over these brows!" said my long-suffering wife riding shotgun.

Family road trips can be fun. Americans love three-row haulers and off-road bruisers, and Hyundai has combined the two flavors – like Reese's peanut butter and jelly – to create a tasty recipe. With the Palisade XRT Pro, Hyundai follows in the footsteps of other models like the Ford Explorer (Timberline model), Chevy Traverse (Z71) and Honda Passport (TrailSport) – to marry its family hauler with the latest in off-road tech. It's awesome.

Sitting atop my XRT Pro tester in Metro Detroit afternoon traffic, I marveled at how ga-ga we've gone for the adventure craze. In front of me was a Jeep Wrangler Rubicon. To the left of me a Toyota 4Runner TRD, and to the right of me a Traverse ZR1. All armed to the teeth with all-terrain tires, jacked chassis, plastic fenders and off-road modes to ... pick up the kiddies from school.

My weekend trip to the Glen (where I would be racing in an SCCA regional race), however, would show off the Palisade's full arsenal in its natural habitat: an 18-hour road trip through international borders, interstates, service stations – and yes, even dirt roads.

The Palisade was separated at birth from the Hyundai Group's other three-row ute, the Kia Telluride. They share the same bones, interior amenities, and even off-road capacities (the Telluride's XRT Pro doppelganger is called the X-Pro). But let's face it, the Telluride has overshadowed Palisade with its upscale, Cadillac-like styling: vertical lights cues, tidy grille, scalloped flanks. Kia has even applied these attributes to the K4 sedan to make one of the most upscale mainstream compacts in the market.

The Palisade, meanwhile, went its own way with a typically funky sci-fi Hyundai design. Sometimes it works (ooooh, that Elantra is pretty) and other times, ahem Palisade, it looks a bit butch.

The XRT Pro model, however, allows Palisade to lean into macho design.

Check out the cool stacked headlights and chunky wheels married to a wardrobe of Cast Iron Brown paint, black body cladding, one-inch suspension raise and a front grille that looked like it came off, well, my barbecue grill. Butch becomes XRT Pro.

Hyundai derives the Palisade name from the steep "palisade" cliffs of California and the Hudson River – bold, natural features that inform the SUV's bold, upright design style. My journey didn't go as far as the Hudson, but it did take me across the natural wonders of Lake Erie, Niagara Falls and the Empire State's Finger Lakes region. And with 418 miles of driving range, it could make the trip to Watkins Glen without a gas stop, unlike its $20K-more expensive, 320-mile-range electric sibling, the Hyundai Ioniq 9, which would require a 30-minute charging stop.

For such long-distance duty, the Palisade is outfitted with an interior as funky – yet functional – as its exterior.

The design is a pleasant combination of rounded door handles amid a chunky horizontal console, dash and door pockets. The slavish adherence to horizontal design form restricts storage space in the doors as, say, a vertical door cut-out for a tall water bottle would fit the XRT Pro's adventurous passengers.

But, as a whole, the cockpit has upscale character, particularly the steering wheel, which sports a unique blocky design and excellent ergonomics for adjusting cruise control speed and radio volume without taking your eyes off the road.

The dash is dominated by Hyundai's familiar twin instrument and infotainment screens and complemented by clever ergonomics. Palisade moves drivetrain operations – including the START button – to a single stalk on the steering wheel, which opens cargo space in the center console. Sub-storage for my wife's purse, cupholders, phone charger, the works.

Family reaction to this was mixed. My son Sam drove Palisade around the Glen and found the stalk annoying because he couldn't see it behind the chunky wheel spokes. Be sure to bring your USB-C phone charging cables! Multiple ports are littered through the cabin – but none are USB.

On interstates like I-90, the Hyundai was smooth as silk, though I missed the hands-free Super Cruise and BlueCruise systems offered by, respectively, Chevy Traverse and Ford Explorer. The Hyundai's adaptive cruise required a constant hand but it did prove smart at using GPS to navigate the road. For example, it slowed for I-90's famed 35-mph, 90-degree turn through Cleveland. Smart car.

After Mrs. Payne and I grabbed Burger King to go, she took over cruise duties while I played third-row passenger.

Second-row captain's chairs collapse forward with the touch of a button next to the headrest for access to the third row. My 6'5" giraffe legs were tight but there was room for my phone (another USB-C port), onion rings and drink.

Better still, I could flatten the seatback in front of me (using a lever on the second row seat's base) to make an ottoman. With my legs stretched out, I checked email while sipping my beverage. So quiet was the cabin that when we made a call, I could join the conversation as if we were on speaker phone in our living room.

As the road hours dragged by, the Hyundai offered pleasant, voice-activated diversions.

Me: Hey, Hyundai, tell me a joke.

Palisade: How do robots eat guacamole? With computer chips.

Me: Hey, Hyundai, set the cabin temperature to 70 degrees.

Mrs. Payne: Hey, Hyundai, set the passenger temperature to 72 degrees.

A feature called SOUNDS OF NATURE is also available in the screen to soothe with, for example, forest sounds of tweeting birds and rustling leaves. Or I could just wait for Google to divert me onto a dirt road and experience the forest for myself.

Henry Payne is auto critic for The Detroit News.

2026 Hyundai Palisade

★★★★

Vehicle type: Front-engine, front and all-wheel-drive, three-row SUV

Price: $41,035, including $1,495 destination fee ($51,110 XRT Pro as tested)

Powerplant: 3.5-liter V-6; Hybrid 2.5-liter inline 4-cylinder mated to electric motor and 1.7 kWh battery

Power: 287 horsepower, 260 pound-feet of torque (V-6); 329 horsepower, 339 pound-feet of torque (Hybrid)

Transmission: 8-speed automatic (V-6); 6-speed automatic (Hybrid)

Performance: 0-60 mph, 6.6 seconds (Car and Driver); towing, 5,000 pounds (V-6), 4,000 pounds (Hybrid)

Weight: 4,420-4,872 pounds

Fuel economy: EPA, 19 mpg city/24 highway/20 combined (V-6 FWD); 16 mpg city/22 highway/19 combined (AWD XRT Pro); Hybrid TBD

Report card

Highs: Rugged presence; upscale cabin

Lows: Snug third row; some USB ports, please

2026 Subaru Solterra takes city streets and mountain trails with equal aplomb

By CASEY WILLIAMS
Tribune News Service (TNS)

There was very little wrong with the Subaru Solterra EV that debuted in 2022, beyond range and charging times. At its California debut, it sliced through Santa Barbara traffic and proved its off-road chops on Catalina. It was a no-hassle city car and all-capable Subaru – as long as you didn't need to go far or fast.

Now, we're in mile-high Denver testing a much-improved Solterra that puts critics on silent mode.

Before we get to the driving, a little history lesson. The Solterra was co-developed with Toyota, which offers the similar bZ4X. Engineering was split 50/50 between the two automakers, but manufacturing is done entirely by Toyota in Japan.

The Solterra's fascia dispenses with any pretense of a grille, accented by glittering LED driving lights over headlamps below. The black wheel cladding and the roof rack that supports 700 pounds of tent camping are pure Subaru. And you can click open the front fender port for a new Tesla-style NACS plug.

The interior still feels more Prius than Outback, with a flat-screen gauge cluster placed high for a head-up effect, but added is a redesigned 14-inch widescreen for infotainment and dual charging pads. A squircle steering wheel clears views of gauges.

New for 2026 are fetching blue and black StarTex vegan leather seats. Our car added Harman Kardon audio, heated/ventilated seats, panoramic sunroof, wireless Apple CarPlay/Android Auto and a power hatch. Storage abounds with the flybridge console, door cubbies and roomy luggage compartment. You can even get it with leg warmers. Seriously.

A full suite of safety tech integrating Subaru's Eyesight system includes automatic emergency braking, lane keep assist, blind spot warning and safe exit assist that detects traffic. Traffic jam assist allows hands-off driving up to 25 mph, but I'd love it with highway speeds.

Range improves 25 percent to a more accommodating 288 miles. Quick charge 20%-80 percent in 35 minutes. That originally took an hour. All-wheel-drive comes standard. Base versions enjoy 233 horsepower (up from 215), but 338 horsepower systems zip 0-60 mph in just 4.9 seconds.

Casey Williams / TNS

I was fine with the old Solterra's performance, but this one elicited giggles as it effaced asphalt between apexes. The suspension is a little soft sweeping through corners, but suitably tuned for daily driving.

On a rocky unpaved section, I was in full rally mode when I looked left to see a moose – all 1,200-plus pounds of him – munching on a tree. My driving partner and I watched him meander across the road before latching onto another tree. We gave him a courteous good-bye and then zipped toward the off-road course.

Dual Function X-Mode with deep snow/mud programming plus 8.3-inches of ground clearance proved their worth whether creeping down steep inclines or rolling over moguls. The Solterra's performance was impressive, with the electronics shifting power as if by magic. It's simply enchanting.

Back at the hotel in downtown Denver, I reflected on a long day of fast driving and grippy climbing. Subaru could have just added range and reduced recharge times, but this vehicle is better in almost every way. Subaru is still setting prices, but expect a base under $40,000 with top trims around $50,000.

Likes: improved range, trail cred, zippy acceleration

Dislikes: no HUD, hands-on cruising, no Wilderness

Casey Williams is an Indianapolis-based automotive journalist and a long-time contributor to the Chicago Tribune.

2026 Subaru Solterra

Five-passenger, AWD Crossover

Powertrain: Li-ion batteries/dual motors

Output (2 versions): 233 hp/338 hp

Suspension f/r: Ind/Ind

Wheels f/r: 18-20" alloy

Brakes f/r: regen disc/disc

Driving range: 288 miles

0-60 mph: 4.9s

Fast charge (10-80%): 35m

Assembly: Japan

TECHNOLOGY

2025's best Smart lights

By CNET.COM (TNS)

No smart device is quite so simple as a smart light. These LED bulbs and light strips can last for years, let you control them from anywhere or set up automatic schedules, and offer many color-changing or syncing tricks. You can also control them on demand with a simple voice command or connect them to other smart home routines you have, like turning on when your door is unlocked.

At CNET, we've tested dozens of the latest smart lights from top brands like Philips Hue, Lifx, Govee, GE Cync and many others. The three lights featured here are our top picks.

The following CNET staff contributed to this story: CNET Editor Tyler Lacoma and Managing Copy Editor Nick Hide. For more reviews of personal technology products, please visit www.cnet.com.

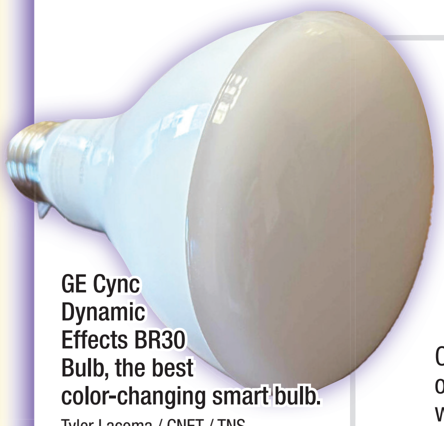
Wiz LED Smart Light Bulb (Color)

Best all-round smart bulb

CNET TAKE: After testing more smart bulbs than I can count, I kept returning to this convenient Wiz bulb that had everything I wanted in a standard A19/E26 home bulb filled with smart features, all for about $10. I recommend spending $2 more for the color version.

This bulb shines with its Matter support, which allows you to use Siri, Alexa or Google Home to control the bulb and connect it to smart home routines without the need for any additional app or hub. There are also lots of scheduling options and automation tricks, from only turning on after sunset to reacting to motion as someone moves through the house.

Wiz LED Smart Light Bulb (Color), the best all-round smart bulb.
Chris Wedel / CNET / TNS



GE Cync Dynamic Effects BR30 Bulb, the best color-changing smart bulb.
Tyler Lacoma / CNET / TNS

GE Cync Dynamic Effects BR30 Bulb

Best color-changing smart bulb

CNET TAKE: I bet you've never seen a floodlight bulb quite like this before. I certainly came away impressed after testing the GE Cync Dynamic Effects bulb, which has four quadrants that can each turn a different color according to your settings, mixing and matching shades to provide the ideal ambiance for anything from parties and movie nights to romantic dinners or Christmas get-togethers.

If you love color changing, this bulb gets top marks, but I'm also very impressed with the Cync app, which is especially easy to understand and use for such a complex bulb. It also offers music syncing for more in-depth displays. Amazon and Google Home support is a welcome addition, but there's no Apple support here yet.

Govee LED Strip Light

Best smart light strip

CNET TAKE: I've been impressed with Govee light strips in the past, but this newer model is one of the best possible if you want to pick a light strip of a certain length while still giving it plenty of smarts.

Those smarts come courtesy of the detailed Govee app, which allows you to customize colors, enable music sync (with 11 music modes to play around with) or choose from different scenes depending on the mood of the room. The strips also work with Alexa and Google Home.

Light strips aren't for everyone, but I've found them to be a handy and sometimes beautiful solution for outlining displays, TVs, bedframes and stairs around the home. Just make sure you choose the right length, which varies from 16.4 to 100 feet. You can't cut this smart light strip to size.

Govee LED Strip Light, the best smart light strip.
Govee / CNET / TNS

Streaming TV 101

By JIM ROSSMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

I recently helped a friend set up a new mesh Wi-Fi router in his home, which opened up reliable Wi-Fi to his bedroom, which then enabled him to set up a new Smart TV for streaming.

For years, his Wi-Fi router was too weak to send the signal to the far end of his house, which kept him out of the streaming TV world. For all those years, he'd only had an over-the-air TV antenna for free broadcast channels.

When we set up his new Roku TV, we made the decision to start his streaming TV education slowly.

Roku TVs have all the steaming apps you'd ever want or need, and most of them require a subscription. Roku also offers something called the Roku Channel, which is a mostly free source of ad-supported streaming TV shows and movies.

We set him up to watch his local channels over the installed antenna and I showed him how to get into the Roku Channel. I also had to explain another concept, that of pay services nested inside Roku Channel.

Once you have set up the Roku Channel and logged in with your Roku account, you can subscribe to streaming services like HBO Max, Paramount+, Starz, AMC+ and many others from inside the Roku Channel using the payment method in your Roku account.

Roku does a good job of highlighting content on those pay channels, but I had to explain to my friend how to determine which movies and shows were free on Roku and which would cost money.

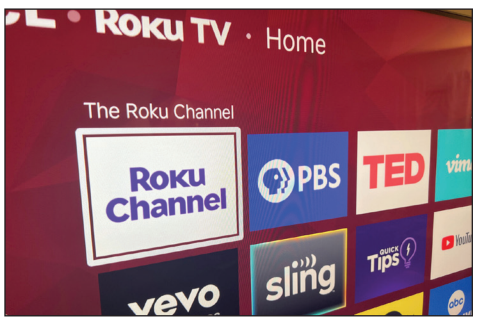
To be fair, most of the pay streaming services offer a short free trial, and they make it really easy to sign up, but I reminded my friend that if he signed up for any of those trials, he'd have to remember to cancel before the subscription renewed if he decided not to keep the subscription.

The Roku Channel also includes a selection of free Live TV channels. These are different from the local broadcast channels my friend receives. The Roku Live channels are streamed and include hundreds of channels – most of which I've never heard of – but there is something for everyone.

I had to explain the difference between broadcast live TV and streaming live TV.

My next visit with my friend featured a smart TV lesson on setting up his first pay subscription. I'll write about that next week.

Jim Rossman is a tech columnist for Tribune News Service. He may be reached at jrossmantechadviser@gmail.com.



Jim Rossman / TNS
Roku TVs have all the steaming apps you'd ever want or need, and most of them require a subscription.

GADGETS

Great coffee maker worth the extra space

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

If you're a regular coffee drinker, you understand the importance of a great cup of coffee to start your morning. Melitta's Vision 12-Cup Automatic Drip Coffee Maker delivers that exceptional brew while serving as a stunning piece of kitchen art.

There are many great features in the Vision, and once you get past the brewed coffee, the 180-degree swivel dashboard is a unique feature that helps with the placement of the machine. It is larger, than a standard coffee maker, but you'll quickly discover that it is worth the extra counter space.

The swivel dashboard, located at the bottom of the brewing coffee carafe, can be moved to either side or to the end. Positioning the dashboard where needed allows the coffee maker to sit sideways on either side or to tuck it in a corner with easy access. It's so innovative that the adjustment makes it convenient for right-handed or left-handed users.

The dashboard has touch controls displayed on an LCD screen. Controls include start, stop, a timer, temperature settings, and a timer for how long you want it to remain on after brewing, up to two hours.

The Melitta Vision features side-by-side towers. Assuming I have it positioned sideways, the left side is the water tank with a 64-ounce capacity. There are measuring marks on the water tank, and a water boiling light indicator in the hot water riser tube that glows orange when the brewing process begins.

On the other side is the tower with a dual heating system to brew and keep the coffee warm. On top is a cone-shaped coffee filter basket using No. 4 paper filters that brews down into a 12-cup borosilicate glass carafe. My first thought after my initial brewing was if the glass handle on the glass carafe was hot to touch, and it was not.

While the features are great, and it's a conversational appliance with its attractive appearance, what's essential is the quality of the brewed coffee. With my fresh-ground French roast, I brewed a five-star cup of morning java. Like many others, I've switched to the easy-to-use coffee pods, which is fine. But having the morning brew with the aroma filling the air when I walk into the kitchen puts it in a different class.

It takes about 10 minutes to brew a whole pot. There is also a pause-and-serve feature; you can remove the carafe while it's brewing, pour a cup and then put the carafe back in to finish brewing without spilling. Cleaning is easy; many of the main parts are dishwasher safe.

https://www.wabilogic.com/collections/melitta-vision $259.99, available in copper/white or black

MyFitnessPal, the leading nutrition tracking app that my wife has used for some time, has introduced several new features in its premium service.

I often struggle to maintain my eating discipline, so my wife decided to put the upgraded app to the test, and she achieved great success. She found the transition from MyFitnessPal to Premium to be significant, noting that the paid features are definitely valuable additions.

The top feature she liked and thought was a game changer is the barcode scan. Scanning lets you scan the items you eat and find an exact match to the food, along with accurate calories and nutrition information.

Other welcome additions to the premium version of the MyFitnessPal app include the option to log food using the Voice Log. You describe the food, and it gives you the No. 1 option, showing the nutrition and calories for what you have described. It works best if you are very specific and include brand names and amounts.

The Meal Scan option allows you to take a photo of a meal and then provides options for what's in it. She liked this option in places such as restaurants where the barcode scan isn't an option.

Another feature that is particularly beneficial in the premium app is the ability to adjust your nutrition goals. If you are tracking macros, this is a feature to adjust goals by calorie, carbs, protein and fat, or set calorie goals for each meal.

The premium version also features a button that allows you to view carbs, protein, and fat by meal. Being able to see the nutrition goals immediately helps keep you on track better than before. You can also track intermittent fasting, and the premium app offers access to full workout routines.

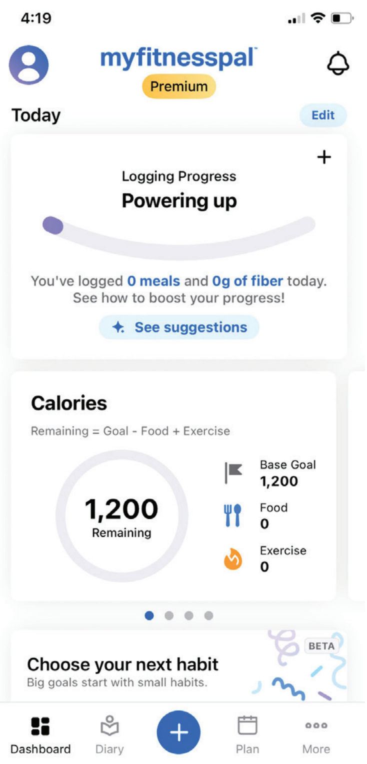
Overall, the premium version is a worthy upgrade if you are looking to track macros and want to easily add foods accurately. The upgrade from the free app to the premium upgrade is $79.99 per year or $19.99 per month.

There is also a Premium Plus option, available for either a $99.99 annual membership or a $24.99 monthly membership. Among the features in the Plus app is a meal planner that guides you through a series of questions about your dietary preferences, then generates a weekly meal plan tailored to your preferences and goals, along with creating a grocery list for you.

https://www.myfitnesspal.com

Contact Gregg Ellman at greggellman@mac.com. Follow him on Twitter @greggellman.

The Melitta Vision 12-Cup Luxe Drip Coffee Maker.
Melitta / TNS



MyFitnessPal / TNS
A screenshot of the MyFitnessPal app.

Layered tones of pink, yellow and gray help to create a soothing space.

Handout photos / TNS

DESIGN RECIPES

Soft hues

By CATHY HOBBS
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Looking for a way to create interiors that feel calm, timeless and beautifully layered? Soft hues like powder pink, powder blue, pale yellow and soft gray are subtle yet powerful colors in a designer's toolbox. These colors bring just enough personality to a space without overwhelming it, striking that perfect balance between serenity and sophistication.

Whether you're aiming for a modern retreat, a cozy bedroom or an airy living room, these gentle tones can transform an ordinary room into something polished and inviting.

Do

■ DO start with neutrals. Using soft hues as a "foundation" for a space such as for walls, flooring and larger furnishings helps to create an environment that is fresh, airy and bright.

■ DO layer tonal shades. Mix powder pink with hot pint or pair powder blue with navy. These tonal layers add depth while staying harmonious.

■ DO pair soft hues with textured elements such as wood. Try pairing soft gray against warm wood or pale yellow with rattan.

■ DO use soft hues in areas where you want to create a sense of tranquility such as bedrooms and bathrooms.

■ DO mix soft hues with sharp contrast colors such as black, deep navy or charcoal to help "ground" a space.

Don't

■ DON'T overdo it. Using too many soft hues can make a space feel washed out.

■ DON'T forget lighting. Lighting can help highlight your color palette.

■ DON'T use more than three colors in a space. A good rule of thumb is to use no more than two to three soft hues in a space.

■ DON'T skimp on quality. Choose high-quality fabrics, finishes and paint to help ensure a luxurious look.

■ DON'T forget that soft hues can be "gender-neutral." Powder hues can be modern and universal.

Cathy Hobbs is the owner of Cathy Hobbs Design Recipes, a home staging company based in New York City (www.cathyhobbs.com). She is also the owner of Highland Passive House, a Home Staging + Design Center based in New York's Hudson Valley (www.highlandpassivehouse.com). Cathy's practical, how-to design advice can also be found in her book, "Home Design Recipes."

Powder pink toss pillows are paired with artwork that helps to ground the space.

Powder blue chairs are paired with a soft neutral sofa.

How should I plan for a new shed?

Angie Hicks
Ask Angi

As you start planning to fit your tools, gardening gear and outdoor decor into a small space, a new shed can be a tempting option as a late fall job or a plan for early spring. With proper planning, you can make the most of an outdoor storage project.

The average shed costs about $3,500 to install, but you could pay as little as about $1,000 or well past $15,000 for custom work, depending on your needs.

Building a shed can be as simple as assembling a basic prefab kit or as involved as commissioning a fully custom outbuilding with electricity, plumbing and high-end finishes. The right choice depends on how you plan to use it, the space you have, and the longevity you want.

Prefabricated sheds are the most straightforward option; when delivered in panels or even fully assembled, they can be installed in a single day. They come in standard sizes, with limited customization, and often last a decade or so with regular upkeep. They're a solid pick for storing lawn equipment, tools and bikes, or even creating a small hobby space without the fuss of a long build.

Custom sheds, on the other hand, offer maximum flexibility. You can design the layout, roofline, window placement and materials to match your home or specific needs. They typically last decades and can be tailored for anything from a garden workspace to a home office, guest quarters or small studio. However, you'll invest a lot more time in planning and construction to get it right.

Size has a direct impact on your shed project. Smaller sheds are great for tight yards and can store basic tools, bicycles and seasonal gear. Medium sizes, such as 10-by-10, give you enough space for a lawn tractor, workbench and larger equipment without dominating your yard. Larger builds open the door for recreational vehicles, small boats or living space. The larger the shed, the more critical it is to plan for foundation type, placement and access.

K G / Dreamstime / TNS

The average shed costs about $3,500 to install, but you could pay as little as about $1,000 or well past $15,000 for custom work, depending on your needs.

Material choice is another major factor. Wood remains popular for its classic look and customizability, and it can be painted or stained to match your home. Metal sheds are durable, insect-proof and low-maintenance, though they can heat up in summer without insulation. Plastic and resin sheds are lightweight, rot-proof and quick to assemble.

No matter the shed type, a proper foundation is essential. Options range from simple gravel pads and skid systems to poured concrete slabs. A well-leveled, well-drained base keeps your shed stable and dry. Roofing is equally important: asphalt shingles are affordable and widely available, while metal roofs last longer and shed snow easily, but require professional installation.

If you're adding power or water, you'll need to plan for electricians and plumbers, as well as insulation to make the space comfortable year-round. Even small upgrades such as windows, skylights or gutters can improve usability but also add complexity and cost.

Local regulations can shape your project more than you might expect. Many municipalities require permits for larger sheds, or have setback rules dictating how close you can build to property lines. Homeowners associations may have design restrictions. Checking these early can save you time and frustration.

If your goal is to save money without sacrificing quality, focus on smart design and material choices. A single-sloped roof uses less material than a gable roof. Smaller footprints cost less to build and maintain. Skipping unnecessary windows or keeping the layout simple reduces cutting and waste. A shed professional can help you figure out the best options for you.

Ultimately, the best shed for you is one that meets your functional needs, fits comfortably in your space and holds up well in your climate. Whether you're putting up a modest prefab for garden tools or investing in a multi-purpose structure for work and leisure, good planning pays off. With the right prep, your shed can be more than just storage; it can be a long-lasting, useful and attractive addition to your property.

Tweet your home care questions with #AskingAngi and we'll try to answer them in a future column.

Carlos Gonzalez / The Minnesota Star Tribune / TNS

The Great! Lakes Candy Kitchen up the shore north of Duluth.

Go to Minnesota's North Shore for the fall leaves – stay for these *attractions*

By CHRISTA LAWLER
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

Leaves change, but roadside attractions do not.

Minnesota Hwy. 61, which winds for 150 miles along the North Shore from Duluth to Grand Portage, is rich in popular points of interest: Gooseberry Falls, Split Rock Lighthouse, Betty's Pies. But there are also plenty of places to pull over for more quietly charming experiences: statues of fictional characters, the remains of a shipwreck, or all the chocolate you can cram into a Subaru.

From west to east, here are some different reasons to veer off the two-lane highway. Let us know your own favorite stops.

Great! Lakes Candy Kitchen

This small colorful shop in Knife River feels like stepping into a life-size Candyland board game. It's operated by several generations of candymakers – the Canelake family business started on the Iron Range (and continues there, too) in 1905. Everything here is handcrafted and the air is thick with sweet smells: almond bark, square caramels, dark fudge, turtles, peanut butter cups. But have you even been here if you haven't tried the hot air? *(223 Scenic Dr., Knife River)*

Madeira shipwreck

The barge Madeira sank near the shore during a 1905 storm named for a far more famous shipwreck. In the Mataafa Storm, the sturdy steamship Mataafa grounded close enough to what is now Duluth's Canal Park for witnesses to hear the crew crying out for help. The Mataafa cracked in half. The men in front lived; those on the back part of the ship died. Along the shoreline, Duluthians watched while huddled over bonfires.

Forty-five miles up the shore, the crew of the Madeira fared better. Just one man died when the ship sank near the cliffs where the Split Rock Lighthouse now stands. The Madeira wreck is visible from the lighthouse in calm waters. For a better look, take in the view from a kayak. Day Tripper of Duluth offers guided tours through Oct. 15. *(3713 Split Rock Lighthouse Rd., Two Harbors)*

St. Urho's statue

You've heard of St. Patrick, and the lore that he banished the snakes from Ireland. But have you heard of the Finnish version, St. Urho, who used his big voice to push the grasshoppers out of Finland, saving the grape crop?

This saintly character gets his celebration on March 16, just before the Irish take hold with green beer everywhere and a green river in Chicago. In Finland, Minnesota (population 220), St. Urho has a presence year-round. An 18-foot statue, carved with a chain saw by Don Osborn, sits in the town's Memorial Park. *(Hwy. 1 and County Road 7, Finland)*

Rocky Taconite statue

It's a taconite take on a snowman: Two giant taconite-looking pellets make up the character Rocky Taconite. He stands in his little red boots on a mass of real taconite near a welcome sign to Silver Bay, which requires a slight detour off Hwy. 61.

Rocky Taconite has long been the city's mascot. He was sketched out by a dentist, a transplant from Paul Bunyan territory who believed that statues drew visitors, according to the nearby Bay Area Historical Society. Reserve Mining Co. took on the $500 construction fee. (County Road 5, Silver Bay)

Taconite Harbor ghost town

This gone-but-not-forgotten town came into being the way so many did. In 1957, Erie Mining Co. offered two dozen houses along a single street to its employees. Within 30 years, with the decline in taconite mining, its residents were evicted. The cost of maintenance had become prohibitive, they were told, according to a 1986 Star Tribune story.

There are just a few indicators of the town that once existed in this space: old signs, overgrown paved areas. A visitor would likely drive past it at least once before the "Aha! This is the place!" moment. *(Schroeder Township)*

Father Baraga's Cross

Father Frederic Baraga is known as the Snowshoe Priest, but it was a canoe trip that led to this distinctive memorial. In 1846, Father Baraga and Ojibwe paddler Louis Goudin crossed Lake Superior in a birch bark canoe during an impossible storm. When they hit land, Baraga marked the spot with a cross – a thank you to God for the safe passage.

The Slovenian-born Roman Catholic missionary came to the United States in the 1830s to minister to Native Americans and immigrants. He famously trekked great distances through snow to get to the people he served in the Great Lakes region. Baraga died in 1868, and nearly 100 years later the cause for his sainthood began.

Baraga's rustic cross has since been replaced with a large granite structure that stands off a gravel path in a scenic spot near the water's edge. *(56 Baraga Cross Rd., Schroeder)*

WTIP radio

At a certain point along the North Shore, Grand Marais-based community radio station WTIP (90.7 FM) comes in clear. Like so many public radio stations, it feels like picking up a friendly passenger and getting the scoop on a region, its passions and its soundscape.

Oh, that soundscape. Somehow the station's music often syncs up perfectly to the vistas along this route. It is also available for streaming.

Devil's Kettle

Mysterious and mesmerizing, part of the joy of Devil's Kettle is getting to Devil's Kettle, within Judge C.R. Magney State Park. It's a short but intense hike along the Brule River where nature makes way for man-made stairs. So many stairs. More than one hiker asked one day this summer, "Is it worth it?"

Of course it is. At a certain point, the river splits in two. One side washes down rocks, creating a waterfall. The other side drops into a hole and goes who-knows-where. (It actually goes back into the river, according to the Department of Natural Resources. But citizen scientists struggle to see how, exactly, it works.)

There are plenty of places near here to sit on rocks and stare into the void. And then there are more steps. *(Judge C.R. Magney State Park, northeast of Grand Marais)*

TRAVEL TIPS

Travel Insured's essential wildfire advice for travelers

Wildfires can transform a dream vacation into a stressful situation within minutes, but Travel Insured International emphasizes that proper travel insurance can provide crucial protection when fire-related events disrupt travel plans.

As wildfire seasons become more intense in destinations such as California, Hawaii, the Mediterranean and Australia, travelers need comprehensive coverage that addresses the wide-ranging effects of these natural disasters.

Key Coverage Areas

Travel Insured's protection plans cover multiple scenarios that wildfires create.

When fires make hotels uninhabitable or force closures, trip cancellation coverage may reimburse non-refundable costs, including flights, accommodations and prepaid tours. Coverage can even extend to situations where a traveler's primary residence is under a mandatory evacuation, preventing departure.

Flight delays caused by smoke or poor visibility trigger trip delay benefits, typically after six to 12 hours. These benefits help cover meals, hotels and transportation during extended waits. For travelers already at their destination, trip interruption coverage addresses situations where wildfires force early departure, covering unused trip portions and new travel arrangements.

Emergency Situations and Special Circumstances

Mandatory evacuations receive particular attention in Travel Insured's coverage.

Idriss Bigou-Gilles / AFP / Getty Images / TNS

The owner of a tourist bubble home stands amid the damage caused following wildfires in Durban-Corbieres, in the Aude department, southern France, on Aug. 9.

The company's plans may help with temporary lodging, meals and transportation costs when local officials issue evacuation orders. Its 24/7 non-insurance assistance services help locate safe shelter and coordinate new bookings during emergencies.

Missed connections due to wildfire-related delays are covered through missed connection benefits, which can reimburse new tickets or overnight accommodations. Road closures that prevent airport access may also qualify for coverage, including rebooking costs and extended hotel stays.

Medical and Air Quality Considerations

Travel Insured addresses health concerns related to wildfire smoke through accident and sickness medical benefits. If travelers become ill from smoke exposure, coverage may help with doctor visits, hospital stays and medications during the trip. However, this coverage typically doesn't cover cancellations based solely on poor air quality without official warnings.

For travelers seeking additional flexibility, Travel Insured offers Cancel for Any Reason coverage through their WTP Deluxe and WTP Platinum plans, which must be purchased within specific timeframes after initial trip payment.

Planning Recommendations

It's important to purchase coverage early and maintain thorough documentation during wildfire-related disruptions. Travelers should keep receipts, evacuation notices, airline communications and official travel advisories to support successful claims.

– Eraine Wessler, TravelPulse (TNS)